

# Georgi Plekhanov

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## *Selected Philosophical Works*

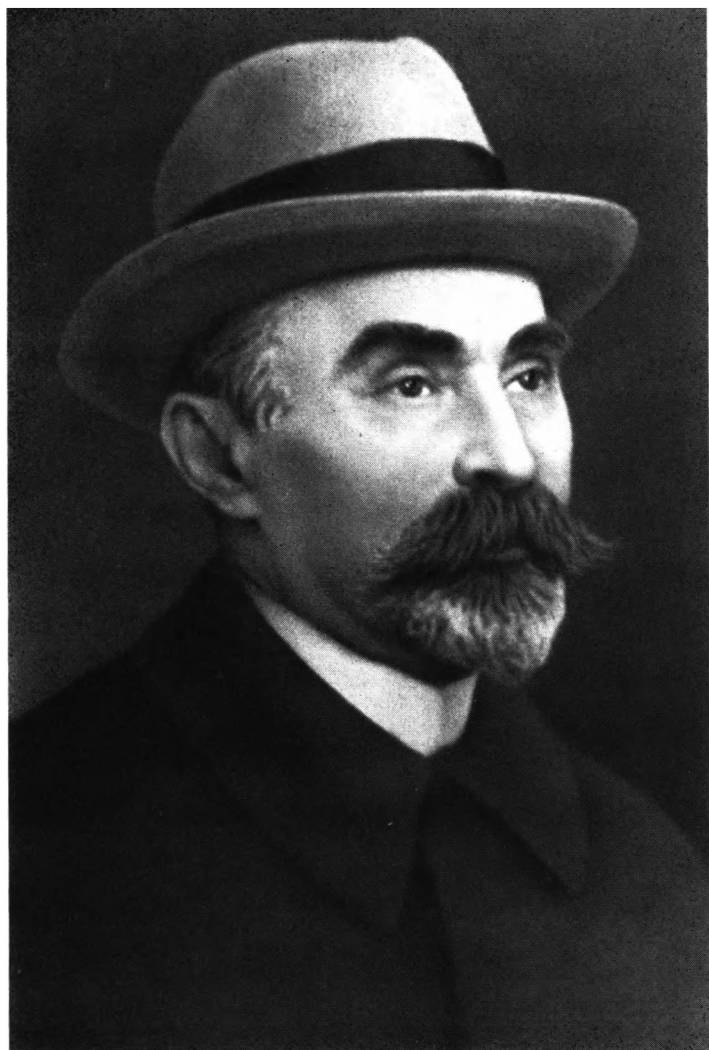
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### *Volume 4*

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INSTITUTE OF PHILOSOPHY  
OF THE ACADEMY OF SCIENCES  
OF THE USSR



# Г.В.Плеханов

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философские  
произведения

**В ПЯТИ ТОМАХ**

**Том IV**

ИЗДАТЕЛЬСТВО  
ПОЛИТИЧЕСКОЙ ЛИТЕРАТУРЫ  
МОСКВА

# Georgi Plekhanov

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## *Selected Philosophical Works*

IN FIVE VOLUMES

**Volume IV**

PROGRESS PUBLISHERS  
M O S C O W

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## **G. V. PLEKHANOV AND HIS WRITINGS ON THE HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHICAL THOUGHT IN RUSSIA**

Georgi Valentinovich Plekhanov was an outstanding Marxist historian of philosophy, an eminent authority on the philosophical thought of mankind and a connoisseur of its finest traditions.

The range of Plekhanov's scientific interests in the sphere of the history of philosophy is extraordinarily wide. His attention was attracted by the pre-history of philosophical thought, consisting of people's pre-scientific ideas at the time of the disintegration of primitive society, and the early stages of its history, namely, the teachings of the ancient Greeks. Plekhanov's works contain an analysis of the philosophical systems of the modern age, the English materialists of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Descartes and Spinoza, the eighteenth-century French materialists, the idealists Berkeley and Hume, and classical German philosophy, in particular, Hegel and Feuerbach. His works analyse from the Marxist viewpoint the history of the sociological doctrines of the age of capitalism, above all, the sociological views of the writers of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Enlightenment, the utopian socialists and French historians of the time of the Restoration.

To Plekhanov's pen belong numerous articles on the philosophical and sociological doctrines of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, including works which provide a penetrating scientific criticism of the world outlook of the Narodniks and anarchists, the neo-Kantians and Machists, the god-seekers and god-builders, the "Vekhists" and Tolstoyans, the revisionists of philosophy and vulgarisers of Marxism.

As an historian of philosophy Plekhanov never confined himself to the past in his scientific studies. In turning to the history of the philosophical thought of past ages, he not only defended the materialist and dialectical traditions of the past, but, first and foremost, asserted and championed the progressive philosophical ideas of his day, the ideas of Marxism.

A pioneer of Marxism in Russia and an active member of the international working-class movement, Plekhanov devoted many



of his works to an analysis of the history of both Russian and world philosophy. He had a profound understanding of the pressing theoretical and political need for a Marxist interpretation of the history of philosophy and of the whole of social thought in Russia. This was all the more necessary because in Russia questions of the history of social thought were the focal point of a bitter ideological and political struggle waged by revolutionary Marxism against reactionary monarchist, liberal Cadet, Narodnik-Socialist-Revolutionary and other trends hostile to Marxism. In connection with this ideological and political struggle Plekhanov turned constantly to the history of Russian philosophical, socio-political and aesthetic thought, bringing to the forefront the teachings of nineteenth-century revolutionary thinkers, Belinsky, Herzen and Chernyshevsky, in particular, and contrasting these teachings with reactionary ideology, liberalism, idealism and mysticism.

Plekhanov's works on the history of philosophy, Russian philosophy included, are by no means all of the same nature and value in terms of their ideological content.

In the first twenty years of his Marxist activity (1883-1903) Plekhanov produced some outstanding scientific works in which he provided a profound theoretical analysis of the history of materialism, dialectics and progressive sociological ideas from the standpoint of Marxist philosophy.

In 1904-13 Plekhanov wrote a number of works dealing with problems of the history of world philosophy. Some of these works contain errors and shortcomings of a fundamental nature and they bear the mark of the political sin which Plekhanov committed after the Second Congress of the R.S.D.L.P. (1903), when he went over to the Menshevik position. But for all their errors and shortcomings these works of Plekhanov's also helped to assert progressive, materialist traditions and fight the ideological enemies of Marxism.

For all the substantial errors which he made, particularly in his works of the Menshevik period, Plekhanov's legacy in the sphere of the history of philosophy is a valuable contribution to Marxist theoretical thought, which rightly belongs to the international working-class movement and to this day is still serving the cause of the ideological struggle of Marxism against reactionary bourgeois philosophy and sociology.

\* \* \*

A large and important place in Plekhanov's writings is devoted to questions of the history of Russian philosophy and Russian social thought in general. To Plekhanov's pen belongs the major work on N. G. Chernyshevsky which was published originally

in the journal *Sotsial-Demokrat* (printed abroad) in 1890-92, and then came out in two editions that differed greatly from each other, in 1894 (in German) and in 1909, as well as several articles on this famous Russian revolutionary. Plekhanov produced a number of vivid and profound works on the great Russian thinker and critic V. G. Belinsky (in 1897-98 and 1909-11). In 1911-12 Plekhanov wrote articles, speeches and reviews in connection with the centenary of the birth of the founder of the free Russian press abroad, A. I. Herzen, the article "Dobrolyubov and Ostrovsky", and other works about Russian revolutionary thinkers. He also wrote a series of articles and reviews of books about the "Westerners"—P. Y. Chaadayev, V. S. Pecherin, V. N. Maikov, the ideologist of "official nationality" M. P. Pogodin, the Slavophiles I. V. Kireyevsky and A. S. Khomyakov, the Russian historian A. P. Shchapov, N. A. Nekrasov, the Narodniks, L. N. Tolstoy and other Russian thinkers. During Plekhanov's lifetime three parts of his general work on the history of Russian social thought from the time of Kievan Russia, to the early nineteenth century were published.

Disproving liberal "theories" that nineteenth-century Russian revolutionary thought was "groundless" and suffered from "doctrinairism", Plekhanov established that the Russian revolutionary thinkers, Belinsky, Herzen and Chernyshevsky, in particular, were the forerunners of Marxism in Russia and that Marxism is their lawful heir. "Our present views and aspirations are the organic product of the history of the Russian revolutionary movement," he wrote.

In applying the principles of historical materialism to Russian reality, Plekhanov attacked religious-mystical, Slavophil and such-like falsifiers of the history of Russian social thought who presented it primarily as idealist and religious and denied the influence on it of the revolutionary movements and progressive trends in social thought of the West. Plekhanov showed that in Russia in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries progressive philosophical and socio-political thought developed on the basis of Russian socio-historical conditions not in isolation, but in close contact with West-European culture and the revolutionary movement, experiencing the beneficial influence of progressive trends in Western theoretical thought.

In his book *The Development of the Monist View of History* and in other works Plekhanov sought to reveal this law as a kind of dependence in the development of ideology, philosophy included, in any given country on the social, socio-historical environment of other countries, particularly neighbouring ones. "As almost every society is subjected to the influence of its neighbours," he wrote, "it may be said that *for every society there exists, in its turn, a certain social, historical environment which influences*

*its development.*" "The influence of the historical environment of a given society tells, of course, on the development of its ideologies as well. Do foreign influences weaken," Plekhanov asked, "and if so to what extent do they weaken, the dependence of this development on the economic structure of society?"\* In the final analysis, as we can see from Plekhanov's works, the extent of "foreign influences" depends on the economic structure of the interacting societies and is directly proportionate to the similarity of the social relations of the countries in question.

Plekhanov treated the problem of the mutual influence of political, philosophical, aesthetic and other ideas which develop in this or that country and the position of the classes in society, the class struggle. He rejected the schematic approach to the social thought of the different peoples, which ignores the historical features of this thought, and believed that each literary trend, each philosophical idea acquires a shade of its own, sometimes almost a new meaning, in each individual country.

Rightly emphasising, unlike the religious-mystical and Narodnik theoreticians, the ideological community of Russian and West-European social thought and the role of the influence of West-European thought on Russian thought, Plekhanov overdid this somewhat; to use his own expression he "went too far" in the other direction: he did not always analyse the internal process of the development of philosophical thought in Russia, underestimating the continuity of its different trends and occasionally exaggerating the influence of West-European philosophy on Russian philosophy.

Plekhanov's views on the history of Russian philosophy are the reverse of Slavophil and liberal views which regarded the development of Russian philosophical and socio-political thought as a "single stream" void of contradictions and independent of the class struggle. Plekhanov argued that the development of Russian social thought is the history of the struggle of progressive and revolutionary ideas against conservative and reactionary ideas, and that the history of Russian philosophy is the history of the struggle between materialism and idealism. He traces the growth of two tendencies in Russian social thought, the revolutionary and liberal tendencies, and shows that revolutionary social thought developed in the struggle against liberalism. Describing Chernyshevsky's attitude to the liberals, Plekhanov wrote in 1890: "Cowardice, lack of foresight, narrow-mindedness, inertia and loud-mouthed boastfulness—these are the distinguishing features which he saw in the liberals of that time."\*\*

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\* Georgi Plekhanov, *Selected Philosophical Works*, Vol. I, Moscow, 1974, pp. 626 and 627.

\*\* See this volume, p. 122.

Not confining himself to the history of epistemology, logic and methodology, Plekhanov showed that the history of sociological, aesthetic and ethical ideas is an integral part of the history of philosophy. By virtue of the requirements of social life, the attention of progressive Russian philosophical thought was focused on problems of sociology, aesthetics and ethics. In solving these problems of such urgent importance for society, progressive Russian thinkers were thereby advancing the theory of knowledge and logic, developing the dialectical method, etc. In extending the sphere of enquiry of Russian philosophical thought to the study of the development of sociological, aesthetic and ethical ideas, Plekhanov was the first in Russia to provide a scientific explanation of the process of development of the materialist doctrines of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries which "the official science" both then and later regarded as being "beyond the confines of philosophy". Unlike certain superficial scholars who doubted that Belinsky, Herzen and Chernyshevsky could be regarded as philosophers and sociologists because they had written none or few special treatises on problems of the theory of knowledge or sociology, Plekhanov succeeded in finding some gems of philosophical and sociological thought in the critical and journalistic works of these great Russian thinkers.

In his works Plekhanov showed that the theoretical basis of the views of the Russian revolutionary thinkers of the nineteenth century, Belinsky, Herzen, Ogarev, Chernyshevsky, Dobrolyubov, Pisarev and others, was their "resolute", i.e., militant, materialism which, in his opinion, proceeded from Feuerbach's materialism and was its application on Russian soil. Plekhanov was right in emphasising in his works the great and beneficial influence of Feuerbach's philosophy on the Russian materialist thinkers in their struggle against idealism and mysticism. He was also right, although not entirely, when he noted that there were some vestiges of anthropologism in the views of Russian materialist thinkers who followed Feuerbach.

But he was wrong in believing that in philosophy Chernyshevsky and the other Russian materialists were merely followers of Feuerbach. He did not show that they had advanced beyond the confines of anthropological materialism and failed to realise that the materialist world outlook of Herzen and Belinsky was an important ideological source for the formation of the philosophy of the "people of the sixties".

Plekhanov's works show that Belinsky, Chernyshevsky and Dobrolyubov provided a theoretical foundation for realism in art, applied philosophical materialism to aesthetics, examined art from the historical point of view and waged an effective and uncompromising struggle against idealist theories of "art for art's sake", etc. Plekhanov was one of the first to reveal the enormous

ideological-educational and revolutionising influence of the literary and critical writings of the Russian revolutionary thinkers. He wrote, for example, of Chernyshevsky's novel *What Is To Be Done?*: "Who has not read and re-read this famous work? Who has not been enthralled by it, who has not become purer, better, brighter and bolder under its beneficial influence? Who has not been impressed by the moral purity of the main characters? Who, after reading this novel, has not reflected on his own life, not put his own aspirations and inclinations to the test? All of us have drawn from it both moral strength and faith in a better future...."\*

Plekhanov's works on Russian philosophy, including those written during the period of the struggle against liquidationism and counter-revolutionary liberalism, give a basically Marxist, scientific conception of views on the history of Russian philosophical and socio-political thought, which proceeds from Marx's materialist interpretation of history. However, the value of this Marxist, scientific conception was reduced by some serious methodological and theoretical mistakes made by Plekhanov, which manifested themselves mainly in his Menshevik period under the influence of political opportunism. These errors in Plekhanov's views on the history of Russian philosophy made themselves felt most fully in the new edition of his book on Chernyshevsky (1909), in his articles on Belinsky and Herzen written at the beginning of the second decade of the twentieth century, and particularly in the unfinished book *A History of Russian Social Thought*.

In individual works Plekhanov maintains wrongly that the philosophical thought of economically backward countries cannot exert a strong influence on the philosophical thought of other countries. The facts of history refute this view. Thus, for example, in the eighteenth century Germany, which was relatively backward in the economic and political respects, was the birthplace of the classical systems of philosophical thought, the most valuable acquisition of which was dialectics, which was immeasurably superior to the philosophy of the advanced countries of that time—England and France—where metaphysics predominated. Plekhanov was also wrong in denying the influence of eighteenth-century Russian culture (because Russia was an economically backward country) on the culture of France and other advanced countries. While experiencing the ideological influence of French, German and other cultures, Russian culture in the eighteenth century also, as the most recent scientific research has shown, exerted a positive influence on West-European science and social thought.

Plekhanov's works on the history of Russian philosophy do not trace fully enough the continuity of materialist traditions in Russia.

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\* See this volume, p 149.

He somewhat underestimates the Russian philosophical tradition. "...There can be a serious attitude to questions of method only in a society which has had a serious philosophical education," he wrote in *Our Differences*, "a thing which Russian society could never boast of. The inadequate philosophical education made itself felt with particular force in our country in the sixties, when our 'thinking realists', having established the cult of natural sciences, began cruelly to persecute philosophical 'metaphysics'. Influenced by this anti-philosophical propaganda, Chernyshevsky's followers were unable to master the methods of his dialectical thinking and concentrated their attention merely on the *results* of his studies."\* If what Plekhanov says here is right to a certain extent with respect to the Narodniks, who did master precisely the weak, erroneous aspects of Chernyshevsky's social views, it is wrong with respect to the revolutionary democrats, the "people of the sixties", who followed Chernyshevsky. Fighting against idealist metaphysics, they never engaged in persecuting either the materialist or the dialectical (Hegelian included) tradition of philosophical thought, but followed and developed it.

Another error in Plekhanov's views on the history of Russian thought is that he does not see that the main role in the socio-political and sociological views of the nineteenth-century revolutionary Russian thinkers was played not by utopian socialism, as Plekhanov thought, but by revolutionary democratism which expressed the interests of the peasant masses. While continuing to regard the socio-political views of Belinsky, Chernyshevsky and the other revolutionary Russian thinkers as purely educational, Plekhanov did not attain the only correct viewpoint, that of Lenin, who showed that the revolutionary democratism of Belinsky and Chernyshevsky was of a militant peasant character and expressed the moods and hopes of the peasant serfs.

Plekhanov is also guilty of a number of inaccuracies in his assessment of the philosophical views of the nineteenth-century Russian thinkers, their dialectics in particular. While considering Belinsky and Chernyshevsky, for example, to be dialecticians, he nevertheless made some incorrect statements to the effect that their enlightened viewpoint hindered the development of their theoretical judgments, particularly their dialectics.

If the philosophers of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment in their demands for the reorganisation of society in conformity with "human nature" were metaphysicians in their approach to the phenomena of social life, to man, and the German dialectical idealist philosophers approached social life historically, but renounced the enlightened and revolutionary ideas of the eighteenth-century thinkers, the Russian revolutionary thinkers, for example, Belin-

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\* Georgi Plekhanov, *Selected Philosophical Works*, Vol. I, p. 164.

sky and Chernyshevsky, by adopting the position of the Enlightenment, were allegedly compelled to abandon dialectics according to the logical device of the "antithesis" widely applied by Plekhanov. From Plekhanov's point of view the more consistently they behaved as enlighteners, the less they adhered to the dialectical method, and vice versa. In fact, however, Belinsky's works of 1845-48, when he was a consistent supporter of "Enlightenment", were imbued with the revolutionary method; and Chernyshevsky's works of 1859-62, when he placed his hopes on a peasant revolution in Russia and prepared it ideologically, were imbued to a much greater extent than his earlier works with the ideas of dialectics. Their works of this period develop the ideas of revolutionary negation of all old, obsolete customs and institutions, ideas which were aimed against the reactionary views of the "protectors", the Slavophiles, the conservative theories of the liberals, etc.

Plekhanov himself rightly maintained that the Russian revolutionary thinkers bequeathed us "several ... attempts at applying the dialectical method to the solution of important problems in Russian social life".\*

Plekhanov did not explain, however, that the world outlook of the Russian revolutionary democrats who followed the most important principles of Feuerbach's materialism differed greatly from the latter's metaphysical, anti-dialectical philosophy. The revolutionary democrats regarded dialectics as the "algebra of revolution", they adopted the historical approach to man, defending not an abstract "man in general", but the common, working man; they were free from the religious-ethical accretions characteristic of Feuerbach's materialism, recognised the great role of practice in the process of cognition, and so on. Plekhanov failed to understand that the Russian revolutionary democrats, by basing themselves on dialectics and the new discoveries of the natural sciences, went further than Feuerbach in philosophy and developed what was essentially a new type of materialist world outlook, the philosophical expression of the interests, moods and hopes of the peasantry rising to revolutionary struggle.

Reading the 1909 edition of Plekhanov's book on Chernyshevsky and comparing it with Plekhanov's articles on Chernyshevsky in the *Sotsial-Demokrat* (1890-92), Lenin commented: "Because of the *theoret[ical]* difference between the *ideal[ist]* and *mat[erialist]* view of history Plekh[anov] *overlooked* the *practical[-polit[ical]* and *class* difference between the liberal and the democrat."\*\*

In the final period of his life, in 1912-16, working on his *History of Russian Social Thought*, Plekhanov, who was an opportunist

\* Georgi Plekhanov, *Selected Philosophical Works*, Vol. I, p. 165.

\*\* *Lenin Miscellany XXV*, Russ. ed., 1933, p. 231.

Menshevik at this time and later became also a social-chauvinist, was influenced in his views on the history of social thought in Russia by liberal conceptions of the Russian historical process. His unfinished book reflects the liberal theory of "state principles" which asserted that in Russia all initiative came from above, from the government. *A History of Russian Social Thought* ignores and underestimates the revolutionary movement of the peasantry, which is described as "anarchy", "sedition", etc. It advances the mistaken view that all the estates and classes in Russia were enslaved by tsarism, that the class struggle in Russia did not shake, but rather strengthened the landowning, autocratic structure, etc. Finally, this book asserts wrongly that in Russia social thought repeated the same ideas and the same questions as in the West, that the development of Russian social thought was explained in the final analysis by the logic of West-European social development.

There are many such mistaken tenets in Plekhanov's *History of Russian Social Thought* and they testify that in the final years of his life he abandoned Marxist views of history and the views he held when he was a revolutionary Marxist. Therefore Plekhanov's legacy on the history of social thought in Russia must be studied and assessed not in terms of *A History of Russian Social Thought* (although this contains valuable factual material pertaining to Russian history of the eighteenth century and earlier periods), but mainly in terms of his works on this subject written in the eighties and nineties of the nineteenth century, at the beginning of the twentieth century and during the years of reaction (1907-10).

The essence and significance of Plekhanov's views on the history of Russian philosophy and social thought are not determined by the errors and shortcomings listed above. For many years Plekhanov defended Russian progressive social thought from the viewpoint of Marxist materialism and presented the revolutionary teachings of the nineteenth century, in particular, the ideas of Belinsky and Chernyshevsky, in the light of Marxism.

\* \* \*

For more than a quarter of a century, beginning with his first Marxist works, Plekhanov wrote with unflagging interest on the world outlook and activity of N. G. Chernyshevsky, whom he considered the pride, glory and adornment of Russian literature. Among Plekhanov's works on N. G. Chernyshevsky pride of place belongs to the four articles under the common title of "N. G. Chernyshevsky" in the *Sotsial-Demokrat* published abroad, which were printed shortly after the famous Russian revolutionary's death, in 1890-92; and also his Introduction and Addenda for the German translation (and, in part, exposition) of the afore-mentioned arti-



cles entitled *N. G. Chernyshevsky* which were published in a separate volume by Dietz in 1894. In 1897 Plekhanov wrote the valuable work "The Aesthetic Theory of N. G. Chernyshevsky". In 1908 he prepared a new edition of the book *N. G. Chernyshevsky* which was put out in 1909 in Russian by the legal Shipovnik Publishers; for this edition Plekhanov wrote a new Introduction and Part One. In 1909 he wrote the article "N. G. Chernyshevsky" for *A History of Nineteenth-Century Russian Literature*. In 1910 Plekhanov's review of Y. Steklov's book on Chernyshevsky was printed in the *Sovremennyy Mir* under the title "More About Chernyshevsky".

Plekhanov's works on Chernyshevsky are completed by his article "Chernyshevsky in Siberia", published in the legal Russian journal *Sovremennik* in 1913\*; this article, which deals with letters and other works written by Chernyshevsky while in exile in Siberia and published then for the first time, introduces some fundamentally new elements into Plekhanov's assessment of the Russian materialist's philosophical views.

In his works on Chernyshevsky Plekhanov speaks of the great forerunner of Russian Social-Democracy with filial respect and gratitude. He says of himself: "My own intellectual development was greatly influenced by Chernyshevsky, the analysis of his views was a most important event in my literary life."\*\*

Plekhanov's works on Chernyshevsky reconstruct the figure of the great Russian revolutionary and thinker, show him as "a man of uncompromising political struggle" and "a defender of the peasants' interests in journalism" and explain how his views relate to Marx's theory.

In seeking to show the applicability of Marxist principles in Russia and defending them from the attacks of Narodnik ideologists, Plekhanov was naturally bound to adopt a critical approach to Chernyshevsky's teaching, particularly to his weak and mistaken views which were taken up by the Narodniks, exaggerated by them and opposed to Marxism (namely, peasant utopian socialism, economic theory, etc.). And although Plekhanov right-

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\* The present volume contains the first article, printed in No. 1 of the *Sotsial-Demokrat* for 1890, of Plekhanov's work *N. G. Chernyshevsky*, which gives a general description of Chernyshevsky's activity and world outlook, his philosophical and sociological views (the second, third and fourth articles from the *Sotsial-Demokrat*, which expound Chernyshevsky's political and economic views and his utopian socialism, are not included in the five-volume edition of Plekhanov's *Selected Philosophical Works*). The present volume also contains the Introduction and Addenda written by Plekhanov in 1894 for the German edition of the book *N. G. Chernyshevsky*. It also includes Part One and the Introduction to the book *N. G. Chernyshevsky* published in 1909, and the article "Chernyshevsky in Siberia". "The Aesthetic Theory of N. G. Chernyshevsky" is included in Vol. V of the present edition.

\*\* See this volume, p. 377.

ly considered that these views "belong to an age in the history of socialism that should now be regarded as past", he nevertheless sought to approach them historically, as views which were progressive for their time, but which in the modern age had ceased to meet the requirements of the day.

Referring to the first edition of Plekhanov's book *N. G. Chernyshevsky* in his article "A Retrograde Trend in Russian Social-Democracy", V. I. Lenin commented: "In his book on Chernyshevsky (articles in the collection *Sotsial-Demokrat*, issued as a separate volume in German) Plekhanov fully appreciated the significance of Chernyshevsky and explained his attitude to the theory of Marx and Engels."\*

Reading the second edition of the book on Chernyshevsky, published by Plekhanov in 1909, Lenin noted a number of passages (particularly in the new introduction to the book), in which Plekhanov takes a step backward by comparison with the article in No. 1 of the *Sotsial-Demokrat*. Many of Chernyshevsky's theses which gave a biting and apt description of Russian liberalism were omitted by Plekhanov in the 1909 edition, as were his statements that Chernyshevsky warned the public against the corrupting influence of the apologists of the bourgeois order, i.e., the liberals; the forceful, vivid description of Chernyshevsky's struggle against liberalism given by Plekhanov in the 1890 edition was also omitted: "Who does not know that these people [the liberals are the same *exploiters* in politics as they are in the sphere of the economy, where they belong to the class of businessmen and entrepreneurs? It was for these exploitative inclinations that Chernyshevsky hated them. And this hatred of *exploiters* shows through on every page of his political reviews."\*\* Also omitted was the passage in which Plekhanov showed the significance of Chernyshevsky's criticism of liberalism for the struggle against liberal trends in the Russian social movement of the late nineteenth century: "What would N. G. Chernyshevsky have said," Plekhanov asks, "to the by no means few people here now who, while calling themselves revolutionaries, pin all their hopes on a liberal 'society' and seek by hook or by crook to turn our revolutionary party into a party of respectable and moderate liberals?"\*\*\*

All these changes made by Plekhanov in the work *N. G. Chernyshevsky* for the 1909 edition are explained not so much by the fact that this time it was being published legally in tsarist Russia, but by the influence of the political opportunism and conciliatory tendencies of Menshevism.

In his comments on the 1909 edition of Plekhanov's book on Chernyshevsky Lenin could not ignore the fact that Plekhanov

\* V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 4, p. 271.

\*\* See this volume, p. 124.

\*\*\* Ibid., p. 123.

had directed his attention mainly to the weakness of Chernyshevsky's theoretical views, to the idealism of his historical views, and had not attached sufficient importance to Chernyshevsky's practical revolutionary activity. With reference to Plekhanov's statement: "Like his teacher, Chernyshevsky concentrates his attention almost exclusively on the 'theoretical' activity of mankind..."\* Lenin commented rightly: "Pl[e]kh[anov]'s book on Chernyshevsky suffers from the same shortcoming."\*\*

Plekhanov maintained: "There is nothing improbable in the assumption that Chernyshevsky belonged to a revolutionary society."\*\*\* But he did not give a comprehensive analysis of Chernyshevsky's activity in his works. Plekhanov's writings do not show Chernyshevsky's influence on revolutionary young people, progressive officers and active members of the national liberation movements in Poland and other countries. Plekhanov was of course wrong when, on the basis of Chernyshevsky's critical remarks about the backwardness and oppression of the masses, he wrote that Chernyshevsky "really did not count upon the initiative of the people either in Russia, or in the West" and that "the initiative for progress and all changes in the structure of society of benefit to the people belonged, in his opinion, to the 'best people', i.e., the intelligentsia".\*\*\*\* True, Plekhanov frequently spoke of Chernyshevsky's faith in a popular revolution and his conviction that "the people is awakening from its slumber and making energetic, although frequently almost unconscious, efforts to improve its lot".

In expounding Chernyshevsky's teaching from the consistent Marxist point of view, Lenin evidently did not consider it necessary to criticise publicly the erroneous elements in Plekhanov's writings on Chernyshevsky, especially as Plekhanov was close to the Bolsheviks at that time in the defence of nineteenth-century revolutionary and materialist traditions.

In spite of the serious errors in Plekhanov's writings on Chernyshevsky, these works played a most positive role on the whole: in them Chernyshevsky was shown as a revolutionary, an outstanding materialist thinker, an ardent fighter for the interests of the masses and as a supporter of utopian socialism, a champion of the socialist path of development through the peasant commune, etc.

In his early works on Chernyshevsky Plekhanov emphasises the Russian revolutionary's hatred of all forms of oppression, including bourgeois oppression, and liberal glorification of capitalism. At the same time he shows Chernyshevsky as a defender of the

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\* See this volume, p. 310.

\*\* *Lenin Miscellany* XXV, Russ. ed., 1933, p. 221.

\*\*\* See this volume, p. 148.

\*\*\*\* Ibid., p. 187.

interests of international democracy, full of ardent sympathy for liberation movements wherever they arose—in France or America, Italy or Hungary. Chernyshevsky hated the liberals who, in relation to these movements, acted as exploiters, using the people's hands to pull "chestnuts out of the fire". Although, as Plekhanov rightly remarked in the first article for the *Sotsial-Demokrat*, Chernyshevsky did not idealise the people of that time and did not overestimate the consciousness and revolutionary mood of the serf peasantry, which was extremely downtrodden and undeveloped, he nevertheless placed his hopes, particularly after 1859, on peasant uprisings and also on a very rapid growth of an "extreme party" which was entirely on the side of the peasantry, and believed in the possibility of a peasant revolution.\*

Plekhanov's works on Chernyshevsky give a detailed analysis of the Russian revolutionary's socialist views. Criticising Y. Steklov, who in his book exaggerated the similarity between Chernyshevsky's views on future society and scientific socialism, Plekhanov regards these views as a type of utopian socialism.

Plekhanov was right in regarding Chernyshevsky as a utopian socialist, because Chernyshevsky did not connect the socialist transformation of society with the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat, nor could he have done so given the backwardness of serf-owning Russia at that time.

At the same time Plekhanov noted that Chernyshevsky was aware of the importance of the class struggle in human societies, realised the dependence of people's concepts on their social environment, had a profound understanding of the social conditions under the influence of which the development of philosophical and political thought takes place, etc.,\*\* and was beginning to understand the decisive influence of the material aspect of the life of nations on other aspects of this life.\*\*\*

"Chernyshevsky," Plekhanov wrote, "was able to explain the development of philosophical thought by the course of the political struggle, i.e., again by the development of the social environment. We also know from his article 'The Anthropological Principle in Philosophy' that any given society and any given organic part of that society considers useful and just that which is useful to the society or its part. Chernyshevsky had only to apply this view consistently to the history of the ideological development of mankind to see clearly how this development is conditioned by the clash of human interests in society, i.e., by the 'economics' of the given society. And Chernyshevsky did in fact see this clearly, at least in some cases."\*\*\*\*

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\* Ibid., pp. 118-19.

\*\* Ibid., pp. 83-86.

\*\*\* Ibid., p. 274.

\*\*\*\* Ibid., p. 275.

Examining the socialist ideas which Chernyshevsky expounds in *What Is To Be Done?*, Plekhanov notes the step forward which Chernyshevsky took by comparison with the utopians of the past: "In these dreams [a reference to the dreams of Vera Pavlovna, the heroine of Chernyshevsky's novel *What Is To Be Done?*—*M.I.*]," he writes, "we are attracted by Chernyshevsky's full realisation of the fact that the socialist system must be based on the widespread application to production of the technical forces developed by the bourgeois period.... The emancipation of the proletariat can come about only through the emancipation of man from the 'power of the land' and nature in general. And this emancipation has made absolutely indispensable those armies of labour and that extensive application of modern productive forces to production of which Chernyshevsky spoke in Vera Pavlovna's dreams...."\* This realistic and profound view of Chernyshevsky's on the future socialist society elevates him above the Narodnik utopias which portrayed this society in the form of a federation of peasant communes tilling their fields with the plough.

Plekhanov ranked the Russian revolutionary Chernyshevsky among the adherents of modern materialism and believed that Chernyshevsky, "... gifted with a fine, exceptional and very active mind, could have discovered the deficiencies and remedied the shortcomings of his teacher's [Feuerbach.—*M.I.*] views, i.e., in other words, do what Marx and Engels did."\*\*\* This, however, as Plekhanov points out, was prevented by the unfavourable external circumstances of the life around him.

Plekhanov sought to trace the development of Chernyshevsky's ideas in connection with the requirements of Russia's social development. He was quite right when he said of Chernyshevsky: "Philosophy interested him mainly as the theoretical basis of certain practical requirements"\*\*\* and explained the historically conditioned narrowness of the world outlook of Chernyshevsky, who did not attain the level of Marxism, by the backwardness of serf-owning Russia and the unfavourable turn his own life took.

Plekhanov showed that Chernyshevsky began his path at the same point as Marx and Engels—with the transition from Hegel to Feuerbach, but unlike them he was unable to subject the German materialist's "anthropological" philosophy to a radical revision and remained a supporter of this philosophy all his life. "The very name of the only philosophical article written by Chernyshevsky points to Feuerbach," Plekhanov writes. "Feuerbach was the first to speak of the *anthropological* viewpoint in philosophy.... For him Feuerbach was not inferior to Hegel, and this says a great deal, because Chernyshevsky considered Hegel one of the most

\* See this volume, pp. 212-13.

\*\* Ibid., p. 80.

\*\*\* Ibid., p. 226.

brilliant thinkers. Thus, the philosophical viewpoint of our author has been found. As a follower of Feuerbach, Chernyshevsky was a materialist.\* According to Plekhanov, Chernyshevsky, like Feuerbach, directed his attention in philosophy mainly to the question of the relationship of the subject and the object, and he solved this question in a materialist way. He never descended to the level of the vulgar materialism then widespread among naturalists.

In showing Feuerbach's role as Chernyshevsky's teacher in philosophy, Plekhanov is, however, guilty of a certain one-sidedness in regarding Chernyshevsky as an anthropological materialist; he does not see that Chernyshevsky not only followed Feuerbach's materialist philosophy, but also continued and developed the teachings of the first Russian revolutionary democrats, Belinsky and Herzen, including their attitude to dialectics as the "algebra of revolution", their historical approach to the social life and theoretical thought of mankind, which, as we know, was alien to Feuerbach's metaphysical system. Plekhanov does not describe in his works the first stages in the formation of the philosophical world outlook of the author of "The Aesthetic Relation of Art to Reality" and does not show that he received his first real philosophical baptism from Herzen and Belinsky, whose articles in *Otechestvenniye Zapiski* and the *Sovremennik* had become a symbol of faith for the young Chernyshevsky in his years at the seminary and later at university.

Plekhanov is right in explaining the important role played by Hegel's dialectics in the formation of Chernyshevsky's world outlook; but he is not quite accurate in assuming that the author of the *Essays on the Gogol Period of Russian Literature* learnt dialectics first of all from Hegel; we know from Chernyshevsky himself that Hegel's dialectics, critically assimilated and interpreted in a revolutionary spirit by Belinsky and Herzen, was first studied by Chernyshevsky in the works of these Russian thinkers and that Hegel in the original was less to his liking than Hegel in the interpretation of the latter's Russian pupils.

Rightly regarding Chernyshevsky as a "resolute materialist" and "an outstanding materialist of the modern age" Plekhanov showed that the level of Chernyshevsky's philosophical views in the serf-owning Russia of that day was such that "you are surprised not that Chernyshevsky was behind Marx and Engels, but that he was so little behind them".

Plekhanov shows that Chernyshevsky was not "Feuerbach's slave" and that he applied "the basic theorems" of philosophy to aesthetics, the "moral" sciences, and so on. In "The Anthropological Principle in Philosophy" and in his works of the sixties and

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\* Ibid., p. 72.

seventies Chernyshevsky, unlike Feuerbach, begins to see the connection between philosophical idealism and the interests of the exploiting classes. Plekhanov wrote about this in 1909 as well: "... we have the right to assume that he associated the present state of philosophy with the class position of the people who make a special study of it. In other words, it is most likely that Chernyshevsky established a causal connection between the extensive dissemination of philosophical 'illusionism' at the present time and the decline of the social class whose ideologists are, for the most part, the philosophers of our day."\*

Plekhanov does not reveal in his works the connection which existed between Chernyshevsky's world outlook and the natural sciences and enabled Chernyshevsky to give a basically correct assessment of spontaneous-dialectical discoveries in these sciences and substantiate in his works, although not always consistently, the principle of development as applied to the phenomena of nature. Plekhanov also does not pay enough attention to the fact that the Russian materialist, in expressing the interests of the peasantry which was rising to the revolutionary struggle against serfdom, was freeing himself from the contemplativeness of the old materialism and beginning to introduce the criterion of practice into the theory of knowledge, not reducing practice, as Feuerbach did, to a sensory-contemplative and theoretical activity, but including "people's material activity" in practice as its most important element.

True, Plekhanov makes a certain exception for Chernyshevsky's aesthetics. Here the latter, to quote Plekhanov, "rehabilitates reality" not only in philosophy, which Feuerbach also did, but in its application to a special branch of science, developing the principles at which Belinsky arrived in the final years of his literary activity.

In his articles in the *Sotsial-Demokrat* Plekhanov showed that Chernyshevsky fought against idealism in all its "aesthetic nooks and crannies", particularly in the solving of general theoretical questions on the origin of art and its significance in life, in the understanding of the aesthetic categories of the beautiful, the sublime, the tragic, etc.

In Plekhanov's works we find splendid proof of the fact that the great Russian critic dealt severe blows to idealism and metaphysics in aesthetics and to the reactionary theory of "art for art's sake", upheld materialist principles in literature and the arts and showed that art, by pronouncing judgment on the phenomena of life, teaches us how to live, and thereby blazed new trails in art.

Plekhanov frequently showed that Chernyshevsky (for example, in the article "A Criticism of the Philosophical Prejudices Against

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\* See this volume, pp. 256-57.

Communal Land Tenure") was a brilliant dialectician. Reproducing in his work of 1909 Chernyshevsky's description of Hegel's dialectical method, Plekhanov rightly considered that "in his [Chernyshevsky's] philosophical views one finds ... the embryo—a perfectly viable one, it is true—of materialist dialectics".\* Evidence of this, according to Plekhanov, is Chernyshevsky's recognition of the eternal, universal nature of the law of the change of forms, the rejection of old forms and the emergence of new ones, etc. This is also proved by the fact that "Chernyshevsky sees that social being contains mutually conflicting elements; he also sees how the struggle of these mutually conflicting social elements produces and determines the mutual struggle of theoretical ideas. But this is not all. He sees not only that the development of any science is determined by the development of the corresponding category of social phenomena. He understands that the mutual class struggle is bound to leave a profound mark on the whole internal history of society."\*\*

Plekhanov's works show that, insofar as Chernyshevsky remained basically an idealist in his understanding of the history of society, he could not, of course, reveal and substantiate scientifically the inner logic and laws of development of social reality which lead the latter of necessity to turn into its opposite, i.e., into a new reality. For the same reason he occasionally deviated from dialectics; advancing, for example, the propositions on "man's normal requirements" and "abnormal", "irrational" social relations, in the spirit of the "anthropological principle", he deduced from this the "principle" of the struggle between "the desire for improvements" and "the force of habit", etc. The historical limitations of Chernyshevsky's dialectics are also felt in his occasionally unsuccessful application of the so-called "hypothetical method" to the study of certain economic phenomena in their, so to say, "pure form". In principle Chernyshevsky's "hypothetical method" cannot be regarded as belonging to metaphysics. With the help of this method the eminent Russian economist sought to reveal the essence of economic phenomena, abstracting himself from all chance, in order that the most essential "element in these phenomena of interest to us should reveal its nature in the most indisputable way". However, in abstracting himself from the concrete historical conditions in which this or that social phenomenon took place, Chernyshevsky occasionally deviated from the dialectical principle of the concreteness of truth, as a result of which these phenomena were examined from the viewpoint of "man's requirements", as "good" or "bad", etc. One must not think, however, as Plekhanov sometimes did, that by follow-

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\* Ibid., p. 252.

\*\* Ibid., p. 277.



ing the hypothetical method in his economic studies, Chernyshevsky rejected the historical (i.e., dialectical) method. Plekhanov himself in fact refuted this one-sided view of his by showing the brilliant application of dialectics by the author of "A Criticism of the Philosophical Prejudices Against Communal Land Tenure", an undoubtedly economic work.

The contradictions in Plekhanov's assessments of Chernyshevsky's dialectics are explained by the fact that he often sees the Russian revolutionary mainly as a follower of Feuerbach and does not show the fundamental differences between the materialist philosophy of the revolutionary-democratic trend, whose greatest representative was Chernyshevsky, and the metaphysical materialism of Feuerbach, whereas the philosophy of the revolutionary democrats included dialectics as the basic method of approach to the cognition of the world and regarded it as the theoretical substantiation for revolutionary transformations (the "algebra of revolution"). True, it was an incomplete method, not yet fully elaborated and not always consistently applied, particularly to sociology. Yet it was not one of the possible methods of thinking, including the metaphysical, applied by Chernyshevsky, but the basic method of the revolutionary democrats, which imbued the whole of their world outlook. The viewpoint of the class struggle, the defence of the interests of the common people, and the revolutionary rejection of all old, obsolete orders, was organically inherent in Chernyshevsky, as a revolutionary democrat, and therefore he advanced beyond the confines of anthropologism and metaphysics. It was only the "unfavourable external conditions" about which Plekhanov speaks so often, Russia's economic backwardness and the absence there until the 1860s of a revolutionary working-class movement, and later the enforced isolation of Chernyshevsky, who was a prisoner of tsarism for more than twenty years, from the revolutionary movement, that prevented him from extending dialectics consistently to the cognition of social life.

Plekhanov's works on Chernyshevsky, as we can see, contain a number of contradictory statements and debatable judgments. But on the whole, in spite of a certain lack of consistency and individual errors in his assessments of Chernyshevsky, particularly in the works of the Menshevik period, Plekhanov gave in his works the first Marxist, scientific analysis of the activity and world outlook of the great Russian scholar and writer.

Plekhanov was perfectly right in believing that before the spread of Marxism in Russia Chernyshevsky's views "were the most important acquisition of Russian philosophical and social thought. And insofar as this thought renounced its acquisition [the Narodniks, for example.—*M.I.*] ... it regressed in its development".

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Of all the Russian revolutionary thinkers it was Vissarion Grigoryevich Belinsky, who, together with Chernyshevsky, enjoyed Plekhanov's deepest affection and esteem. Plekhanov is the author of a number of works on Belinsky: "Belinsky and Rational Reality" (1897), the speech "V. G. Belinsky" (1898), a long article for *A History of Nineteenth-Century Russian Literature* entitled "Vissarion Grigoryevich Belinsky" (1909), the articles "On Belinsky" in the journal *Sovremennyy Mir* (1910)\* and "Vissarion Belinsky and Valerian Maikov" (1911), and an article for the centenary of Belinsky's birth (1911) in the journal *Nash Put*. He dealt with Belinsky's aesthetic and critical views in the article "V. G. Belinsky's Literary Views" (1897), a review written in the same year of A. Volynsky's book *Russian Critics*,\*\* and also a review written in 1911 of S. Ashevsky's book *Belinsky in the Eyes of His Contemporaries*.

Plekhanov regarded Belinsky as the central figure in the history of Russian social thought. "...It is high time," he wrote in 1897, "that we examined the history of his intellectual development and his literary activity from the standpoint of the *concrete* views of our day. The more attentively we study this history, the more profoundly we become convinced that Belinsky was the finest philosophical organisation that ever appeared in our literature."\*\*\*

Tracing Belinsky's ideological and political development in the 1830s and 1840s, Plekhanov rightly noted that however strongly our critic condemned the people's "silence" before base "Russian reality" of that time, he can by no means be regarded as a representative of any anti-democratic trend in Russian social thought; he "felt a more profound sympathy for the oppressed people than the other members of the Westerners' circle",\*\*\*\* i.e., Herzen, Granovsky and others. While rightly regarding Belinsky as a defender of the people, Plekhanov, unlike Lenin, did not see him as a spokesman for the moods and hopes of the peasant serfs, but as a representative of the *raznochintsi* and a spokesman for their aspirations. However, in contrast to the liberals and ideologists of the "petty-bourgeoisie of the modern age", such as Ivanov-Razumnik, Plekhanov certainly did not regard Belinsky's writing as groundless and dictated merely by his "generous heart". He wrote: "...Belinsky was not only a noble man in the highest degree, a great critic of artistic works and a highly sensitive publicist, but ... he also showed an amazing insight in the formulation, if not in the solution, of the most profound and the most impor-

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\* All these works are included in this volume.

\*\* These two works are included in Vol. V of the present edition.

\*\*\* See this volume, p. 433.

\*\*\*\* Ibid., p. 482.

tant problems of our social development.... *Even nowadays every new step forward made by our social thought is a new contribution to the solution of those basic questions of social development whose presence Belinsky discovered by his brilliant sociological intuition, but which could not be solved by him owing to the extreme backwardness of contemporary Russian 'reality'.*"\*

Plekhanov shows that even in the period of his temporary "reconciliation with reality", i.e., 1837-39, Belinsky moved forward and not backward in the theoretical respect; renouncing the romantic "abstract ideal" which had no real foundation in reality, he followed Hegel in proclaiming the need to proceed from reality, to study its contradictions and trends of development. Consequently Belinsky sought for a more real foundation for his idea of negation than negation in the name of the "abstract ideal", in order to substantiate the "idea of negation" of the old reality by the new reality which grows up logically in the process of struggle on the basis of the old reality.

The backwardness of serf-owning Russia at that time prevented Belinsky from solving this extremely important theoretical task.

In the forties Belinsky was not merely an enlightener, but also a revolutionary democrat, a critic of capitalism and a champion of utopian socialism. And his defence of the rights of the "human individual" in these years by no means limited or restricted the dialectics in his writings, as Plekhanov wrongly assumed. On the contrary, the principle of dialectical development was brilliantly applied by Belinsky (for example, in the article "The Mysteries of Paris", and in his letters from France and Germany) not only to the understanding of the feudal world, but also to the assessment of the capitalist world, and led our critic to the conclusion that the capitalist system, in spite of its progressiveness by comparison with feudalism, was transient and could not be regarded as the ideal social order.

Plekhanov was wrong in ascribing to Belinsky views similar to those of the Slavophiles; thus, in his article of 1909 Plekhanov wrote that from Belinsky's point of view "the people, that is, properly speaking, the proletariat, is forever destined to remain a passive instrument of the bourgeoisie".\*\* Although he realised the progressive nature of capitalist development for Russia, compared with feudalism, Belinsky never placed his hopes on the bourgeoisie, just as he never idealised, as the Slavophiles did, the patriarchal backwardness of serfdom.

Analysing Belinsky's philosophical views, Plekhanov shows that the Russian critic went through the school of classical German philosophy which opened up to him, as it did to other thinking

\* Ibid., pp. 503-04.

\*\* Ibid., p. 485.

people, broad and bright prospects, showing that the power of chance would have to be replaced by the triumph of reason and that necessity would have to become the firm basis of freedom. It was precisely this that attracted progressive Russian people, Belinsky included, to classical German philosophy, to the philosophy of Hegel, in particular.

Whereas in the early years of his enthusiasm for Hegel (1837-39) Belinsky interpreted "reality" too broadly, equating it with existence, and this was one of the reasons why—albeit for a short time only—he arrived at conservative conclusions, he rebelled against these conclusions already in 1840. Plekhanov explains this as follows: "By declaring himself to be the possessor of absolute truth and reconciling himself with what exists, Hegel turned his back on all development and recognised as *reason that necessity* from which mankind was suffering in his day. This was tantamount to declaring himself to be philosophically bankrupt. And it was this bankruptcy that angered Belinsky."\*

According to Plekhanov, Belinsky's revolt against Hegel was theoretically well founded only insofar as it was based on Hegel's dialectics.

Having gone through a short period of enthusiasm for Left Hegelianism, Plekhanov writes, Belinsky advanced, like the West-European thinkers, from Hegel to Feuerbach. In this respect also Plekhanov has understood the essence of the matter correctly. But on the whole his idea of Belinsky's philosophical and political evolution is schematic and in many respects incorrect. In the article "Vissarion Grigoryevich Belinsky" (1909) we read: "The first three acts of Belinsky's intellectual drama may be given these titles: 1) the abstract ideal and Fichtean philosophy; 2) reconciliation with 'reality' under the influence of the 'absolute' conclusions of Hegel's philosophy; 3) rebellion against 'reality, and transition, in part, to the abstract point of view of the 'individual' and, in part, to the concrete viewpoint of Hegel's *dialectics*."

"The fourth act of this drama began with a complete break-away from *idealism* and a transition to the *materialist* standpoint of Feuerbach. But the hand of death lowered the curtain after the opening scenes of this act."\*\*

Belinsky's real ideological and theoretical development is fundamentally different from Plekhanov's ideas about the great critic's philosophical evolution. Soviet research shows that Belinsky adhered to the philosophy of the French Enlighteners and Radishchev at the beginning of the thirties, during his university period, long before he became a supporter and follower of German ideal-

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\* Ibid., p. 420.

\*\* Ibid., p. 501.

ist philosophy. The influence of Fichte's philosophical teaching with its "abstract ideal" was very short-lived on Belinsky, and this influence did not manifest itself in anything of importance in the young critic. Plekhanov was right in thinking that during this period Belinsky "adopted an attitude of complete and unconcealed sympathy for the French Revolution".\*

During the next stage of his ideological and political development also the Russian critic did not cease to serve progressive ideas directed against serfdom and monarchy. Plekhanov himself writes that "Belinsky reconciled himself not to reality, but to the sad fate of his abstract ideal".\*\* But Belinsky's philosophical views proceeded from objective idealism which recognised reality as the creation of the absolute spirit; this view conflicted with Belinsky's enlightened aspirations.

Having become a revolutionary democrat and utopian socialist at the "third stage" of his development, after 1840, Belinsky sought to overcome, and succeeded in doing so by about 1845, the contradiction between advanced socio-political views and the strong vestiges of philosophical idealism in his world outlook; Belinsky's revolutionary ("enlightened") position in the sphere of political ideology helped to strengthen the dialectical elements in his philosophical views, and did not, as Plekhanov maintains, cause him to retreat from them.

Plekhanov shows that the "fourth stage" in Belinsky's ideological and theoretical development (1844-48) is characterised by his break with idealism and transition to Feuerbach's materialism. Belinsky's major critical articles, including his last articles on Pushkin, his annual reviews of Russian literature for 1846 and 1847, his famous letter to Gogol, his brilliant reviews of books on history, and his caustic and devastating articles against the idealism of the Slavophiles, etc., are written in the spirit of the materialist world outlook.

"Belinsky's articles written in the final years of his activity," Plekhanov writes, "contain a whole programme which has not yet been carried out by our literary criticism and which will be carried out only when it is able to adopt the sociological standpoint. This again demonstrates the brilliant power of his intellect."\*\*\*

Plekhanov was also right when he spoke of Belinsky's great sociological insight and pointed out that in the latter years of his life, after he had parted company with idealism and turned to Feuerbach's materialism, he "regarded the development of social classes and class relations, not the development of the absolute idea, as the last instance of criticism".\*\*\*\*

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\* See this volume, p. 473

\*\* Ibid., p. 407.

\*\*\* Ibid., p. 500.

\*\*\*\* Ibid., p. 501.

Plekhanov frequently said quite rightly that "at the time of his bitter skirmishes with the Slavophiles Belinsky was a dialectician to his finger-tips, whereas in their world outlook the dialectical element was totally absent. Hegel would have called them metaphysicians of the first water."\*

However, deviating from his correct conclusion, Plekhanov considers wrongly that Belinsky adhered to the dialectical view only when he was examining the social development of Western Europe, and adopted the viewpoint of the enlighteners when he was discussing the development of Russia. Whereas in fact in his polemic with the Slavophiles on questions of Russia's historical development Belinsky held the viewpoint of the class struggle, which he applied not only to the social life of the West, but also to the history of Russia. Belinsky linked her whole future with hopes for a revolt of the oppressed peasantry.

Individual mistakes made by Plekhanov in his assessment of Belinsky's philosophical views and the nature of his materialism and dialectics, however, cannot obscure the main thing: Plekhanov rated Belinsky very highly as a thinker, particularly in the sphere of sociology and aesthetics. Belinsky, Plekhanov said, "was born a philosopher and a sociologist who possessed all the qualities necessary to become an excellent critic and a brilliant publicist".\*\* In his review of S. Ashevsky's book *Belinsky in the Eyes of His Contemporaries* (1911) Plekhanov showed that Belinsky was not only a brilliant man and a brilliant critic, but also a brilliant sociologist. "Belinsky did not make a single *sociological study*," he wrote. "But I am firmly convinced that—when the dialectician in him was not silenced by the enlightener—he was clearly aware of and even formulated what could then be called the prolegomena of all future sociology that wishes to become a science. In his day only a brilliant thinker could possess such an awareness, and this is why I called him a brilliant sociologist."

Plekhanov's works reveal the important features of Belinsky's sociological views which give us grounds for regarding him as a brilliant sociologist: the dialectical approach to reality, including social reality, as an internally contradictory and law-governed process, the point of view of the struggle of the "estates", i.e., in fact, classes; the idea of capitalism as a progressive social system by comparison with feudalism and of capitalism becoming a system alien to the interests of the people; the idea of the "negation" of all old and obsolete social relations, institutions and ideas, etc.

Plekhanov drew a vivid and on the whole true picture of the development of Belinsky's aesthetic views. Thus, in his article

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\*Ibid., p. 523.

\*\* Ibid., p. 501.

for the centenary of Belinsky's birth, published in the journal *Nash Put*, Plekhanov calls Belinsky the greatest Russian critic in whose articles we find "the most correct assessment of the outstanding works of Russian literature". There too Plekhanov shows that in the final years of his life Belinsky sought, as a result of his study of the development of philosophy, to elaborate a scientific method for the study of literary phenomena. "When Belinsky adhered to Hegel's idealism," Plekhanov writes, "he explained the alternation of literary phenomena, as also the whole of mankind's historical movement, by the dialectical movement of the absolute idea. But when he went over to the viewpoint of Feuerbach's materialism, he *began to link the development of literature with the development of social relations, the historical alternation of different estates and classes.*"

After discarding Hegel's "philosophical cap", i.e., after parting company with absolute idealism, Belinsky, as Plekhanov rightly remarks, "...began to apply the latter's dialectical method [more consistently]. This is particularly apparent in the development of his literary views: they changed mainly in the sense that they became permeated with the element of dialectics."\*

Belinsky now firmly challenges the so-called theory of "pure art", showing that art is "a reproduction of reality, a replica of the world, its re-creation, as it were". Now, as Plekhanov rightly remarks, he regards the artist's duty "from the point of view of dialectics, comprehending therefore that the artist reproducing reality is himself affected by it".\*\* On the other hand, Plekhanov believed that after Belinsky rebelled against "base Russian reality" his literary judgments were based on abstract concepts that were always noble from the moral aspect and often unsatisfactory from the theoretical aspect. In the article "On Belinsky" Plekhanov describes as a retreat from dialectics the fact that, as an enlightener, the great critic demanded that apart from being an accurate portrayal of reality "art *must* orient the reader's view of certain aspects of reality".\*\*\*

But Belinsky did not attempt to impose on reality or art any preconceived, a priori principles of "obligation"; art pronounces its judgment on the phenomena of life not in the name of the abstract concepts of "reason" and not in the name of categories of "what should be"; Belinsky believed that aesthetic judgments express the point of view of those historically determined forces in society which by virtue of the historical conditions are fighting for the radical transformation of life in order that the old shall give way to the new.

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\* See this volume, p. 492.

\*\* Ibid., p. 497.

\*\*\* Ibid., p. 549.

In the final analysis Plekhanov rated the scientific level of Belinsky's aesthetic views most highly. He maintains that from Belinsky's point of view aesthetics does not prescribe for art ideals which should be realised in art, but aesthetics "must consider art as an object which existed long before it and to whose existence it owes its own existence". Plekhanov remarks that this "great scientific task which he set aesthetics has by no means been solved yet in its entirety and may only be solved in the more or less remote future".\*

In general Plekhanov understood correctly the essence of Belinsky's aesthetic views, which found expression in his materialist treatment of the question of the object of art, the realism and ideological nature of art, and the unity of content and form in art.

Beginning with his review written in 1897 on A. Volynsky's essays and the book *Russian Critics*, all Plekhanov's works on Belinsky are directed towards defending the revolutionary and theoretical traditions of the great Russian thinker and critic.

In spite of certain errors in Plekhanov's works on Belinsky, it is thanks to these works that Belinsky first appeared in the history of Russian science and social thought as a great thinker, an eminent representative of the revolutionary *raznochintsi*, and a splendid precursor of Marxism in Russia.

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Plekhanov frequently wrote on the world outlook and activity of Alexander Ivanovich Herzen both in the 1890s and 1900s. But he dealt specifically with his views in several works written in 1909-12: "Herzen in Emigration", an article written in 1909 and published in volume three of *A History of Nineteenth-Century Russian Literature*; "The Birth Centenary of Alexander Herzen" (published in the journal *Budushcheye* in March 1911); "A. I. Herzen and Serfdom" (published in the *Sovremenny Mir* in November and December 1911); "A. I. Herzen's Philosophical Views" (an article published in the *Sovremenny Mir* in March and April 1912); a speech by A. I. Herzen's graveside in Nice (April 1912); a review of V. Y. Bogucharsky's book *A. I. Herzen* (published in the *Sovremenny Mir* in June 1912); Plekhanov's lecture "Tolstoy and Herzen" (given in June 1912) which remained unpublished during his lifetime, and some unfinished synopses of lectures on Herzen which were evidently also given in 1912.\*\*

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\* Ibid., p. 550.

\*\* The present volume contains the following articles: "A. I. Herzen and Serfdom", "A. I. Herzen's Philosophical Views", "Speech by A. I. Herzen's Graveside in Nice" and the review of V. Y. Bogucharsky's book *A. I. Herzen*.



Plekhanov wrote on Herzen's socio-political and philosophical views mainly in the later, Menshevik period of his activity. And this left a strong imprint on the content of these works: the erroneous elements in Plekhanov's views on nineteenth-century Russian revolutionary thought affected them to a far greater extent than they did his writings on Belinsky and Chernyshevsky.

Plekhanov's works on Herzen contain much that is valuable and instructive. In these works, particularly in the article "A. I. Herzen and Serfdom", Plekhanov showed Herzen's role as a selfless fighter against serfdom and tsarism and as one of the pioneers of the emancipation movement in Russia. He noted rightly that as Herzen and Ogarev lost faith in the nobility, so their belief in the revolutionary potential and strength of the *raznochintsi* grew.

Herzen defended the interests of the peasant serfs. "When a man belonging to the *ruling class*," Plekhanov wrote of Herzen, "goes over to the *oppressed class*, he does not thereby prove that he has freed himself from *all class influence in general*, but only that he has freed himself from the influence of *one class* and become subjected to the influence of *another*."\*

In his writings Plekhanov showed that after becoming an utopian socialist as early as the thirties, at university, under the influence of the ideas of Saint-Simon, Herzen remained a socialist for the rest of his life. Plekhanov was fully aware of the limited nature of utopian socialism when he wrote: "To the end of his life Herzen persisted in an error that was characteristic not only of Saint-Simon's teaching but utopian socialism in general. I mean the *inability of this type of socialism to make head or tail of the relation between being and consciousness, economics and politics*."\*\*

Plekhanov reveals the basic difference between the revolutionary, albeit inconsistent, views of Herzen already in the fifties and the views of the Russian and West-European liberals on the fundamental questions of social life. Criticising the liberal historians Cheshikhin-Vetrinsky and Bogucharsky who represented Herzen as a liberal, Plekhanov stresses the socialist nature of Herzen's views on society. "...Herzen the incorrigible socialist," he wrote, "could not resolve these questions in the way in which the majority of his temporary admirers would have them solved. And then these temporary admirers turned their backs on the *Kolokol*."\*\*\*

Plekhanov notes rightly that Ogarev and Herzen in their articles from about 1862, in the *Kolokol* and in other publications, although they addressed themselves to the young nobility, urged it to join forces with and rely upon the peasantry. However,

\* See this volume, p. 560.

\*\* Ibid., p. 571.

\*\*\* Ibid., p. 600.

following his mistaken point of view about the weak revolutionary potential of the peasantry, Plekhanov wrongly ascribed it to both Herzen and Ogarev who, in his opinion, saw the peasantry as "the passive object of the enlightened influence of the educated minority".\*

Plekhanov is wrong when he says in the article "Herzen in Emigration" that Herzen, supposedly because of a lack of knowledge on the part of the people, "does not believe in the historical independent activity of the people. He expects such independent activity from certain strata of the upper classes, from the intelligentsia, as it is now called in Russia." And the conclusion at which Plekhanov arrived in his article "A. I. Herzen's Philosophical Views", namely, that the Russian socialist who took a pessimistic view of the psychology of the class struggle of the peasantry could not help but strive for the reconciliation of the classes, and that this was why Herzen followed the French utopian socialists in renouncing the class struggle and betrayed the dialectical method of his teacher, Hegel, is totally incorrect.\*\*

In fact it was precisely towards the end of his life that Herzen became a more consistent revolutionary democrat, an ardent supporter of the class struggle, and a champion of peasant revolution in Russia (which he wrongly regarded as socialist in nature); he warmly sympathised with the West-European liberation movements and, as the letters "To an Old Friend" show, with the growing working-class movement also.

Plekhanov does not attach sufficient importance to the fact to which Lenin paid serious attention, namely, that not long before his death, in the letters "To an Old Friend", Herzen began to place his hopes on the industrial proletariat of Western Europe and its revolutionary struggle led by the First International.

With regard to Herzen Plekhanov repeats the same mistake that he makes with regard to Belinsky: whereas, in Plekhanov's opinion, Herzen the journalist supported the resolute class struggle against the landowners and tsarism, in his philosophy of history, Plekhanov says, he held the incorrect view that the class struggle played no role at all in the internal development of Russia.

Plekhanov wrongly contrasts the view held by Herzen and Ogarev with the views of the like-minded revolutionary democrat Belinsky, maintaining that Herzen and Ogarev placed their hopes on "the educated class in the state", i.e., the nobility, and Belinsky on the nobility turning into a bourgeoisie. In fact Herzen and Ogarev, in spite of their liberal vacillations in the fifties, linked their hopes for Russia's future with the peasant movement, regarding the "educated minority", the progressive nobles and *raznochintsi*,

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\* Ibid., p. 622.

\*\* Ibid., p. 669.

as "a fermenting agent" called upon to rouse the peasantry to fight against serfdom. Plekhanov's statement that Herzen, as a supporter of "peasant socialism", differed strongly in his views from Chernyshevsky, whom Plekhanov regarded as a supporter of "purely Western socialism", is also unfounded. In fact the differences between these two Russian revolutionary democrats were primarily tactical, and not theoretical or political ones.

For all the mistakes in his analysis of the socio-political views held by Herzen and other Russian revolutionary democrats, which are connected with Plekhanov's underestimation of the role of the peasantry and its ideologists in the history of the class struggle, Plekhanov rated Herzen's role in the Russian emancipation movement highly. In his writings Plekhanov showed that Herzen was a highly gifted person who devoted his great intellect, knowledge and literary talent to the cause of the emancipation of the Russian people, that "in his person our social thought, forced by the censorship to don the garb of literary criticism, at last strode openly and boldly into the sphere of journalism". Plekhanov demonstrated vividly and convincingly the role played by Herzen in showing the international democratic movement, which knew Russia as the gendarme of Europe, another Russia, a thinking, suffering and fighting Russia.

Herzen's socio-political views and the whole of his social, revolutionary activity were organically linked with his philosophical world outlook. "His philosophy," Plekhanov wrote of Herzen, "was, par excellence, the philosophy of an *active* man. It is interesting to follow in his diary the impression produced on him by reading the great philosophers. His assessment of their theoretical merits is not always free from error and, one may think, too cursory, but he never errs in assessing (and makes extensive commentaries on) what might be called the *active* aspects of their theories."\*

In his works Plekhanov advances the idea that Herzen's philosophical views are imbued with dialectics assimilated from Hegel and interpreted as the "algebra of revolution".

Speaking of Herzen's *Letters Concerning the Study of Nature*, in which the dialectical character of natural phenomena is revealed, Plekhanov writes: "All these extracts may easily produce the impression that they were written not at the beginning of the forties, but in the latter half of the seventies, and not by Herzen, but by Engels. Such is the extent to which the ideas of the former resemble the ideas of the latter. This striking resemblance shows that Herzen's mind was working in the same direction as Engels' and, consequently, Marx's."\*\*

Plekhanov gives a correct assessment of certain indisputable

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\* See this volume, p. 683.

\*\* Ibid., pp. 655-56.

merits of the philosophical views of the author of the *Letters Concerning the Study of Nature*, who rebelled against the theological doctrine on the creation of nature by God and against Hegel's translation of this doctrine into the language of philosophy; Herzen entered into an argument with his friend Granovsky who refused to abandon his religious views, etc. Plekhanov noted that in the sixties Herzen "was no longer content with Hegel's and Schelling's idealist answer to the problem of the relation of thinking to being. By that time he must have known well and shared completely the view which the materialist Feuerbach held on this problem."\*

But Plekhanov is greatly mistaken in his interpretation of Herzen's philosophy when he considers that Herzen's philosophical works written in 1842-46—"Dilettantism in Science" and *Letters Concerning the Study of Nature*—express the viewpoint of absolute idealism. Plekhanov failed to understand that Herzen's idealist Hegelian terminology, his occasionally inconsistent application of materialist principles, and his criticism of the metaphysical limitations of the old materialism, particularly on the question of the unity of being and thinking, by no means characterise Herzen as a supporter of idealism and opponent of philosophical materialism. Plekhanov considers wrongly that the *Letters Concerning the Study of Nature* are aimed merely against subjective idealism. He concludes mistakenly that the *Letters Concerning the Study of Nature* abound in idealist deductions and that "each time their author attempts a critique of *materialism*, he reasons as a staunch *idealist*".\*\*

Herzen, however, was right in criticising the old, metaphysical materialism for its empiricism and contempt for theoretical thinking, for the fact that the materialists of the past frequently regarded thought merely as the product of matter, of the motion of matter, and did not take into account the active aspect of thinking, its active influence on being. In criticising, not without some exaggeration, the metaphysical materialists who resolved the antinomy of being and thinking by reducing thinking to being and ignored the active aspect of thinking, Herzen did not lapse into the idealist extreme and did not attempt to solve this antinomy by dissolving being in the absolute spirit as Hegel did. Proceeding mainly from materialist positions, Herzen showed the unity of thinking and being and believed that "spirit, thought, are the results of matter and history". At the same time he stressed the difference between matter and thinking and saw that being and the consciousness of being are in contradiction and that this contradiction is overcome by the reverse influence of thinking on

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\* Ibid., p. 679.

\*\* Ibid., p. 641.

being. Herzen's views in the *Letters*... were essentially materialist, although a number of his propositions and particularly his terminology were not free from "undigested Hegelianism", i.e., from the influence of idealism.

Plekhanov did not understand this and arrived at the mistaken conclusion that the monism to which Herzen adhered in the *Letters Concerning the Study of Nature* was essentially idealist.

Plekhanov was also wrong in alleging that Herzen was criticising not the limited nature of this or that materialist system, but materialism as a philosophical trend in general. He did not see that Herzen, who called his philosophy "realism" (which reveals a certain lack of consistency in his materialist views), was criticising not materialism, but the metaphysical and contemplative nature of the old materialism and particularly the vulgarised reduction of thought to matter which was to be found in the works of certain naturalists. Plekhanov was also wrong in believing that insofar as Herzen was an utopian socialist he deviated from dialectics.

Herzen's works, particularly his letters "To an Old Friend", his open letters criticising the Slavophil views of Y. Samarin, and others, testify to the fact that Herzen's revolutionary democratism, in freeing itself from the liberal vacillations of the fifties, became increasingly based on the dialectical principles of development, negation and struggle. And this encouraged him to abandon idealism in his understanding of the questions of social development and to approach the viewpoint of historical materialism, to stress the great role of the class struggle, of revolutions, in history.

Plekhanov too realised this when he pointed out that "painfully aware of the inadequacy of historical idealism in elucidating the problem of the relation between thinking and being in the history of mankind, Herzen turned naturally if, perhaps, not quite consciously, to historical materialism".\*

The serious errors made by Plekhanov in his analysis of the philosophical and in particular the sociological views held by Herzen, did not prevent him from reaching the correct conclusion that Herzen exerted an enormous intellectual effort in order to find a scientific basis for socialism, although he was not able to solve this task given the economic backwardness of Russia at that time.

In the article "Herzen in Emigration" Plekhanov wrote: "Herzen was one of the finest people produced by the fine period of the forties. He was inferior to Belinsky in logical power of intellect, but superior to him in breadth of knowledge and vividness of literary exposition. As a political journalist he is unequalled in Russia

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\* See this volume, p. 678.

to this day." In his speech by Herzen's graveside in Nice on April 7, 1912, Plekhanov stressed Herzen's important role in the Russian and international liberation movement and the close ideological link between the new revolutionary generations in Russia and the faith in Russia's brighter future which A. I. Herzen preached.

Although only V. I. Lenin succeeded in giving in his work "In Memory of Herzen" a comprehensive and profoundly correct assessment of the activity and world outlook of the great Russian thinker and revolutionary, Plekhanov's works on Herzen, for all their mistakes and contradictory judgments, undoubtedly helped to explain Herzen's role in the history of the Russian revolution, in the struggle for revolutionary traditions.

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Alongside his studies on the world outlook and activity of nineteenth-century revolutionary Russian thinkers, Plekhanov also wrote on works dealing with the history of Russian social thought that appeared in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.\*

He was the author of two articles on the Russian idealist enlightener P. Y. Chaadayev: "Pessimism as the Reflection of Economic Reality" (1895) and "P. Y. Chaadayev" (a review written in 1908 of M. Herschensohn's book). Plekhanov criticises the idealist and mystical ideas in Chaadayev's world outlook and at the same time shows the invalidity of attempts by Herschensohn and other ideologists of the bourgeois-Vekhist counter-revolution to use Chaadayev's teaching as their banner. Plekhanov rightly regards Chaadayev's first "Philosophical Letter" as a forceful and trenchant pamphlet against the backwardness of serf-owning Russia and a highly literary work written from the heart. Without ignoring Chaadayev's theological point of view, which makes itself felt in this letter, Plekhanov rightly remarks that Chaadayev rendered some important services to our emancipation movement. "For instance, to his dying day Herzen had a great sympathy for Chaadayev, and the reason for that was not, of course, because Chaadayev was a mystic."\*\* The predominant feature in Chaadayev's world outlook, according to Plekhanov, is not mysticism, but a negative attitude to the reality of serfdom which is as characteristic of Chaadayev as it is of Herzen; he therefore rightly considers Chaadayev, in spite of the latter's mysticism, as a participant in the emancipation movement.

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\* This volume contains the most important reviews of M. Herschensohn's books, *P. Y. Chaadayev. Life and Thoughts*, *The History of Young Russia* and *Historical Notes*, and of V. Y. Bogucharsky's book *A. I. Herzen*.

\*\* See this volume, p. 698.

Plekhanov gives a convincing critique of the mystical ideas in Chaadayev's world outlook, noting that this mysticism was of a social nature and was engendered by the unsatisfied desire to introduce sense into the life around him and that, in the final analysis, mysticism could not give Chaadayev the satisfaction which he could find only in social activity. In contemporary historical conditions, however, Plekhanov noted, in the age of the revolutionary struggle of the working class armed with the theory of scientific socialism, the revolutionary movement and conscious preaching of mysticism were incompatible.

Plekhanov was also right in objecting strongly to Herschensohn's statement that shortly after the first "Philosophical Letter" Chaadayev changed his views on Russia and drew closer to the Slavophiles, speaking of the "advantages of our isolated position". The series of Chaadayev's "Philosophical Letters" unpublished during his lifetime, and printed after the October Revolution, as well as other works by him have shown that the author of the first "Philosophical Letter" did not cease to be a resolute opponent of Slavophilism and to support the spread of education in Russia and achievements of Western civilisation, etc. Summing up his scientific analysis of Chaadayev's activity and world outlook in his review of M. Herschensohn's book on Chaadayev, Plekhanov demonstrates convincingly the superiority of materialism to mysticism. Mysticism, he says, "did not throw a ray of light, not a single one, on the road that might lead to the elimination of evil. And it could not do so! By its very nature, it could only hinder the discovery of this road, diverting the attention of the highly talented man carried away by it towards a path running in opposite direction to the one which should be taken."\*

G. V. Plekhanov criticised the liberal publicist V. Bogucharsky for his attempt, after joining forces with the mystics and Vekhists, to portray the outstanding Russian revolutionary and philosopher A. I. Herzen as a supporter of the religious-mystical world outlook and the liberal-reformist programme. Liberal "wise men" like V. Bogucharsky, as Plekhanov rightly remarked, did not understand the nature of Herzen's disillusionment with West-European "philistinism". Believing that the victory of the proletariat over the bourgeoisie would entail the downfall of the "petty bourgeoisie", Herzen sensed the unsatisfactory nature of the socialist utopias and sought a scientific basis for socialism. Refuting Bogucharsky's statements that, after parting company with the essence of his former religious faith, Herzen took something of it away to "the other shore" and retained this something all his life, Plekhanov shows that under the influence of Feuerbach's *Essence of Christianity* Herzen arrived at a critical attitude to Christianity. "Having

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\* See this volume, p. 714.

assimilated this attitude to the 'essence of Christianity'," Plekhanov writes, "Herzen certainly could not have been under the influence of this essence 'later', that is, when his reason awoke. Quite the reverse, *his attitude towards it was negative.*"\*

Plekhanov's reviews of works on the history of Russian social thought show that, in spite of individual errors and deviations from the propositions of Marxist philosophy, he championed the materialist world outlook.

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One cannot study the history of the Russian emancipation movement and of progressive Russian social thought and understand their indissoluble links with the revolutionary movement and theoretical thought of the West, their role in the ideological preparation of the ground for Marxism in Russia, without turning again and again to Plekhanov's brilliant and profound Marxist works, which record the splendid pages of the history of the Russian people's spiritual life.

*M. Iovchuk*

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\* Ibid., p. 731.



**SELECTED  
PHILOSOPHICAL  
WORKS**

**VOLUME  
IV**

**I**  
**[WORKS**  
**ON**  
**N. G. CHERNYSHEVSKY]**

# N. G. CHERNYSHEVSKY

## INTRODUCTION [TO THE 1894 GERMAN EDITION OF THE BOOK]

### *Seine Zeit\**

The literary activity of Chernyshevsky belongs for the most part to the time of the notorious reforms of Alexander II.

The Russian liberals still remember the good "Emancipator Tsar" with emotion, they still recite him panegyrics which displease the censors of the present Emperor who, as is well known, regards his father almost as a *Jacobin*. The writer of these lines does not have the honour of belonging to the Russian liberals. Nor, on the other hand, does he have the slightest predilection for Alexander III. He can, therefore, take an objective look at the reforms of the past reign.

For thirty years the policy of Nicholas the "Unforgettable" weighed heavily upon Russia. Stagnation was elevated almost to an ecclesiastical dogma. All life, all thought, all protest was immediately stifled or had to disguise itself beyond recognition. But the Crimean War<sup>2</sup> changed the state of affairs fundamentally. The bankruptcy of Nicholas' regime was revealed, and the creator of this regime could find no way out of his difficult position other than suicide. Discontented elements, who had hitherto been hiding timidly, were boldly raising their heads. Reforms, or a new suicide, and this time not of an individual autocrat, but of the very *principle* of autocracy—this was the alternative which history placed before Nicholas' successor. He prudently chose reforms, the most important of which was *the abolition of serfdom in Russia*.

Slavery existed in this country (under the name of *kholopstvo*) from time immemorial. The earliest Russian legal codes speak of it. Any poor man who decided to sell himself to his rich fellow-countryman could become a *kholop*. In the same way prisoners-of-war were turned into *kholops*. But for the time being the slavery was not widespread. Only the domestic servants of the princes, boyars and rich landowners were slaves. When Russian sovereign princes bestowed populated estates upon their servants, this did

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\* [His time.]

not mean that they turned the peasants inhabiting these estates into serfs. It meant only that the state surrendered to the "service people" its right to the income which was due from the estates. The obligations which the peasants had discharged before for the prince were now performed by them for the landowner. But the peasants themselves remained "*freemen*" as before, with the right of moving freely from one landowner to another or from a landowner's estate to a free commune (i.e., one required to discharge obligations only with respect to the state). This system had two important disadvantages.

Firstly, the big landowners, who were strong by virtue of their property and their position in the state, could ensure their peasants more reliable protection and put them in a more advantageous material position than the poor landowners, who were sometimes only slightly better off than their peasants. Therefore the peasants flocked from the poor landowners to the rich. But there were very many poor landowners. They constituted the main "service" force of the Muscovite state. Up to the end of the seventeenth century it was primarily from them that the Muscovite armies were recruited. If the state did not want to undermine this force, it would have to forbid the peasants to leave the estates of poor landowners. And this it did, by limiting the right of peasants to freedom of movement at the end of the sixteenth century.

Secondly, the freedom of the peasant inflicted a direct loss on the state exchequer. After the strength of the Tartars, who had surrounded the Muscovite state from the south and east, had been broken, vast expanses of totally unoccupied and extremely fertile soil were opened up for agricultural colonisation. Taking advantage of their right to freedom of movement, peasants flocked to this Eldorado. It goes without saying that they were followed by tsarist officials who imposed taxes and obligations upon them. But this took time, and occasionally, in the circumstances of that day, no little time at that. Decades would pass before the state contrived to lay its heavy hand on the settlers. In the meantime the settlers paid nothing at all to the state, which, of course, displeased it greatly. True, the *krugovaya poruka* [collective responsibility] gave the state the *legal* right to exact in full measure the former taxes and obligations from peasants who had remained on the spot and were included in the lists of payers ("*tyagliye lyudi*" [tax-paying people]), *those present* paid for *those absent*. But bitter experience had long since shown the state of Muscovy that the concept of the *legal* possibility to exact taxes was by no means the same as the concept of its *economic* possibility: où il n'y a rien, le roi perd ses droits.\* However diligently tsarist officials might ex-

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\* [Where there is nothing, the king loses his rights.]

tort taxes from the peasants, it was nevertheless impossible to exact from the, say, ten remaining members of the commune the same amount of money, produce and labour (at that time payment in kind still predominated) that it had paid when it consisted in fact (and not only according to a list) of, for example, *forty* householders. The "state coffers" were suffering indubitable losses at a time when developing relations with the West urgently demanded an increasingly diligent replenishment of the exchequer. Binding the peasant to the land was the only possible way out of the situation at that time. The Muscovite state did not overlook it. In the course of the seventeenth century the peasant's freedom of movement was abolished completely. Peasants became serfs totally dependent on the *landowners* and the *state*.

But the *peasant serfs* were legally still not equated with *slaves*. The peasant "bound to the land" was still not the vocal instrument which the *kholop* had been from time immemorial. The honour of the total enslavement of the Russian peasant belongs to the great reformer of Russia, Peter I, and the celebrated Messalina of the North, Catherine II.

Peter had to provide Russia with a standing army trained according to the European model, to reorganise the administration, and to initiate the development of trade, a merchant fleet and a navy, industry and education. All this required money, money and more money. And Peter did not stop at anything to acquire money. The ones who paid most for his reform were, of course, the so-called *podatniye sosloviya* [tax-paying estates]: the peasantry and the poor urban petty bourgeoisie. The immediate economic consequence of this reform was the appalling impoverishment of the people. It goes without saying that Peter could not stop at such a trifle as the final debasement of the peasant serf to the level of the *kholop*. The consolidation and extension of serfdom was in no way contrary to his plans for reform. Quite the reverse, it was *serf* workmen who laboured in the factories and manufactories built by him. Serfdom was an *inevitable condition of the Europeanisation of Russia*. Peter's successors diligently continued his work. For the "enlightened" Catherine II it remained only to dot the "i's". In a decree of October 7, 1792 she announced that "landowners' serfs and peasant serfs shall and must be included in the possessions on which, in the event of a sale from one person to another, deeds of purchase are written and conveyed in the chamber of serf dealings with the levying of duties for the exchequer, as on all other immovable property". The peasant had become a mere *instrumentum vocale*,\* which by its very nature belonged to *movable*, and not *immovable* property. Peasant serfs were sometimes sold in herds, like cattle, at fairs.

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\* [vocal instrument]

Alongside this serfdom became more widespread. Tsars and tsarinas willingly bestowed populated estates upon their favourites. Catherine II introduced serfdom in *Little Russia*.<sup>3</sup> The nobility rejoiced, but its jubilation was sometimes clouded by an unexpected resistance from the peasants.

For all his patience, for all his conservativeness, the Russian peasant did not surrender without a struggle. Almost each step of the government along the path to his enslavement was marked by more or less extensive peasant uprisings. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries we experienced real peasant wars (the "revolts" of Stepan Razin and Pugachev). True, the more the Russian state became Europeanised, the weaker the relative strength of the people's resistance grew. In the nineteenth century there was not a single peasant movement that could be compared to the "revolts" of the preceding centuries. But, in spite of this, peasant uprisings *became* more and more frequent. There was a particularly large number of peasant revolts in the reign of Nicholas, who put them down with truly bestial cruelty. Official statistics exist of peasant revolts, from the mid-thirties up to the Crimean War. They show that in these two decades the number of peasant revolts increased annually with almost mathematical precision. Sometimes nearly whole gubernias were in a state of ferment, and real battles of peasants and soldiers took place. During the Crimean War it was rumoured that the government would give all peasants who volunteered for action their freedom. This rumour gave rise to much "unrest", especially in Little Russia. The conclusion of peace gave rise to another rumour: people started saying that Napoleon III had agreed to stop the war only *on condition that serfdom was abolished*. The government knew the mood of the peasants well and feared a general explosion among them. "It is better to abolish serfdom from above than to wait for the time when it will begin to abolish itself from below," said the Emperor Alexander II.

In such a situation it was natural that the government should fear the discontent which revealed itself in "educated society" immediately after the death of Nicholas. It was better to give voluntarily that which might be taken possibly by force. Thus reasoned the crowned reformer, and thus reasoned most of his favourites.

Only the old "soldiers of Nicholas", who recognised and knew nothing but the *stick*, could reason otherwise. The stick had often got the Russian government out of difficulties. But it was also the stick that had got it into the desperate position in which it found itself at the end of Nicholas' reign. The much-vaunted military system of Nicholas' had turned out to be rotten: the officers, and the generals, in particular, were ignoramuses or cow-

# N. G. Tschernischewsky

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Eine literar-historische Studie

von

G. Plechanow

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Mit einem Porträt Tschernischewsky's



Stuttgart

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1894

Title-page of the German edition of the book *N. G. Chernyshevsky*

ards, the equipment was very poor,\* the embezzlement of public funds in the quartermaster's, artillery and engineering departments had reached the most incredible proportions and was regarded as almost legitimate. Moreover, due to the absence of communications Russia could not make good use at the required moment even of the military forces which she did possess. During the Crimean War the delivery of *one bomb* from Izmail (on the Danube) to Sevastopol cost no less than 5 rubles. Finally, financially Russia was on the verge of bankruptcy. In 1855 the deficit reached 261,850,000 rubles (income: 264,119,000; expenditure: 525,969,000). In the following year it rose even higher. The government hastily concluded peace. But that was not enough. New sources of income had to be found, new productive forces brought to life. But this was impossible so long as serfdom existed. The rumour circulating among the people had a kind of profound meaning: the emancipation of the peasants really was dictated to us "by Napoleon", i.e., by the course and outcome of the Crimean War.

Whereas at the time of its birth under Peter I Russian industry could not manage *without* serf labour, by the middle of the nineteenth century it was quite a different matter. Now the *free workman* was essential for its *further development*. And not only for its development. By the mid-forties voices were beginning to be heard in our literature, asserting (albeit timidly and cautiously, owing to the strictness of the censorship) that the success of *agriculture* was incompatible with the continued existence of serfdom. This was argued most convincingly by the *official* Zablotsky-Desyatovsky<sup>5</sup> in his memorandum which caused a great stir.

During the reign of Nicholas only two railways were built in Russia: from St. Petersburg to Tsarskoye Selo (a small town situated 22 kilometres to the south of the capital) and from St. Petersburg to Moscow. This is not the place to discuss the Homeric thefts which took place during the construction of these railways. We would remark only that the St. Petersburg-Moscow line alone was of economic importance; the Tsarskoye Selo line served merely for the pleasure jaunts of St. Petersburg "society". It is hard now to even imagine the difficulties entailed in the transportation of

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\* "The extent to which Nicholas' 'changing-of-the-guard' generals were badly versed in the art of warfare may be seen, for example, from the operations at Yevpatoria of General Korf, who, with the enemy in sight, did not set up advance posts and therefore lost batteries and many men. There were also cowards, like General Kiryakov who hid in a gully at Alma." (*Historical Essays on Russia from the Time of the Crimean War to the Conclusion of the Treaty of Berlin*, author not named, Leipzig, 1879, Vol. II, p. 33.) A few years ago the historical journal *Russkaya Starina*<sup>6</sup> printed the reminiscences of a participant in the Crimean War who wrote that when the French picked up Russian guns on the battlefields they exclaimed with amazement: "Look what these savages are fighting with."



goods along dirt roads from the Moscow manufacturing area to, for example, the fairs of Little Russia. The more production developed, the more pressingly the need was felt for the construction of a network of railways which would cover, at the very least, Russia's most important towns.

The telegraph service was no better. Up to 1853 there was only one optical telegraph in Russia, between St. Petersburg and Warsaw, and that was reserved for the personal use of the emperor. Electric telegraphs were constructed in the following years, but in an insignificant number: in 1857 the telegraph network did not exceed 3,725 versts. Thus, the development of commerce and industry required the most serious "reforms" from this viewpoint also.

Nicholas did not permit the founding of almost any private joint-stock companies, particularly banking ones. Landowners and merchants applied to state credit institutions for money. "A Russian-American company, two fire insurance societies, and two or three shipping and industrial companies represented the whole of Russia's joint-stock world," says the author of the *Historical Essays on Russia* quoted by us above. The beginning of the new reign was marked by a real stock-and-share fever. One after the other there arose companies which promised gullible people vast incomes and were designed to cover the most varying aspects of socio-economic life (there was, for example, the *Gidrostat* company for the "lifting of sunken vessels out of the water", the *Ulei* company for the "improvement of the everyday life of the worker", and so on). Many of these companies went bankrupt, of course, after filling the pockets of their founders. But the very existence of this fever shows to what extent the Russia of that day had outgrown the old forms of her economic life, inherited from Nicholas. For the development of new forms, however, what was needed above all was to remove the *heavy weight of serfdom* from her.

Finally—and for many tsarist officials this was, probably, the most important factor—serfdom was preventing the government from dipping its hand freely into the peasant's pocket. Taxes were exacted from the serf population through the landowners. It goes without saying that any new increase in taxes, any new burden on the peasant serfs aroused the dissatisfaction of the landowners, undermining the economic stability of the "souls" belonging to them. Freeing the peasant from the landowner's power meant increasing the power of the state over him. Direct relations of the peasants to the state gave far more scope to the imagination of the Ministry of Finances, and for this reason alone the government had to proceed with "emancipation". Expressed in prosaic terms, the question of "emancipation" amounted to the question of who should have the main share of the *surplus product* (respective—surplus value) created by the serf population: *the state or the landowners*.

The state sought to decide this question in its favour. But for this it was essential to free the peasant *with land, and not without land* as the landowners wanted. The historical right of the Russian peasants to the land cultivated by them was beyond all question. But the government was not guided by this right in its plans for emancipation. It was thinking only of placing the peasant in conditions which would make it possible to squeeze the largest possible amount of labour (in the case of payment in kind) and money out of him. Landless farm-labourers were not suitable for this purpose, and this is why the government could not under any circumstances agree to the demands of the landowners' party. But it did its utmost to gild as much as possible the pill which it presented to this party. In freeing the peasants *with land*, it made them pay redemption fees for it which were far in excess of its value. In so doing it, firstly, mollified the landowners, and, secondly, by acting as an intermediary in this operation, it acquired the possibility of pocketing a considerable pile of cash, which represented the difference between what was given to the landowners and what the peasants undertook to pay.

So these were the circumstances which determined the beginning, course and outcome of the peasant reform in Russia. Let us now point to certain other circumstances which produced certain other reforms of Alexander II and determined their direction.

Firstly, we have already mentioned that the Crimean War showed clearly how bad the Russian military system was. One of the distinctive features of the Russian army was its lack of officers with even a semblance of education. Nicholas himself was aware of this deficiency, but could not remedy it for the simple reason that his whole reign was a constant war with education. In keeping with the spirit of this reign, no importance was attached to the sciences at military educational establishments, everything being concentrated on the pupil's success in the "*matter of drilling*". But even these poor educational establishments were too few in number for the requirements of the army. As a matter of necessity officers were recruited from the so-called cadets, who had received a "domestic education" (i.e., no education whatsoever) and had served for a while in regiments in the lower ranks. In the so-called civilian, i.e., non-military, educational establishments the situation was but slightly better. Here too the prime concern was to instil a spirit of obedience and humility in the pupils. Access to the universities was extremely limited by the end of Nicholas' reign. The teaching of *philosophy*\* was banned in the universities, but the students

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\* The fate of philosophy in Russia was always most precarious and perverse; sometimes its teaching was even encouraged by the government, in order to prevent "dreams of equality and wild freedom". Sometimes, on the other hand, it was banned from the universities entirely, as the main source of dreams of "equality" and "wild freedom". Nicholas banned its teaching in

were taught ... *marching!* It goes without saying that when, after the Crimean defeat, the Russian government found it necessary to "*se recueillir*"\* it was compelled to give somewhat greater scope to education. New gymnasias and pro-gymnasias for men were founded, and alongside the "nobleswomen's institutes", where the daughters of the nobility had formerly received instruction, gymnasias and pro-gymnasias were set up for girls of all estates. The rules which restricted the number of university students were abolished, higher technical educational establishments (which had been *cadet corps* under Nicholas) were finally reorganised as military educational establishments, particularly after Milyutin was made Minister of War; a new era began: square-bashing was almost entirely eliminated (no more than one hour a week was devoted to it), the teaching was intelligent, and the syllabus was extended considerably; corporal punishment was almost entirely abandoned (the "Emancipator Tsar" could not bring himself to abolish it *entirely* either here, or in the army in general). Nevertheless the main ill was not remedied by all these measures: the reorganised military educational establishments produced a relatively insignificant number of officers, and it was found necessary as before to recruit officers from the cadets who had received a very poor general and military education. But be that as it may these reforms of Alexander II resulted in an enormous influx of young people into the educational establishments, and the young students played a role of considerable importance in the social movement of that time.

For all the importance of the reforms of Russian educational establishments, however, the government of an *autocratic* tsar would not and could not take the final step of this reform: we did not have what is called academic freedom, the authority of university councils was completely effaced by the authority of the guardians of the educational areas, who frequently had nothing whatsoever to do with "public education". Thus, for example, in the honeymoon of Alexander's liberalism, in 1861, the *Caucasian General Filippson* was appointed guardian of the St. Petersburg educational area (*Admiral Putyatin* being made Minister of Public Education at the same time). Such a state of affairs was bound to give rise to student "unrest" which has been recurring to the present day with the precision of astronomical phenomena.

Russian courts of law had long been renowned for their corruption and the judges for their total lack of knowledge of the laws on

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1850. "An end has been put to the seductive clever-clever talk of philosophy," the Minister of Public Education, Shirinsky-Shikhmatov, exclaimed in delight in this connection. Some professors of philosophy were appointed *censors*. This in itself indicates that they had very moderate dreams of "*wild freedom*".

\* [reflect]

the basis of which they were called upon to pronounce their verdict. The reorganisation of the court system was one of the most harmless of the reforms undertaken by the government of Alexander II. This reform had the support of everyone except the old bribe-taking judges. But it could be carried out consistently on one condition alone: if the power of the police and of the administration in general, which took the liberty of changing court sentences as it thought fit, were limited. Yet this too the government of the autocratic reformer could not and would not desire. That is why the reorganised court system has remained an exotic plant in our country; it is as suited to the general pattern of state establishments in Russia, as a satin top hat to an Eskimo dressed in bear-skins.

Let us now turn to the last reform dictated by the needs of the age and carried out by the "Emancipator Tsar". The government saw that it did not have enough money to satisfy even the most pressing needs of the state. It resolved to place some of the state expenses on the shoulders of local institutions. Government officials could not have coped with the onerous burden of raising funds to cover local "compulsory expenditure", besides these officials pilfered too much. Willy-nilly it became necessary to turn to the local population and present it with "self-government", which, incidentally, has always remained under the strict control of the administration. In the Zemstvo institutions the predominant role belonged to the *big landowners*. In order that the predominance of this element did not harm the interests of the bourgeoisie, which was being cultivated then, as if in a hothouse, the Zemstvos were deprived of the right to tax industrial establishments according to their own discretion: for the imposition of these taxes the government laid down a special rate which was extremely advantageous for the big entrepreneurs. In the end, here, as everywhere, it was the peasant who paid for everything: the Zemstvos usually taxed peasant land far more highly than the land of the rich proprietors.

We do not call a reform the slight weakening of the censorship regulations which, in the final years of Nicholas' reign, reached the height of absurdity, including the banning of the expression "free air current" in *cookery books*. But nevertheless this weakening made it possible for our press to discuss questions at which it did not dare to even hint in the lifetime of the "Unforgettable". Under Nicholas the literary activity of Chernyshevsky would have been restricted to the first large article which he presented to the censor.

Such were the most important reforms of Alexander II. How did the different estates of the Russian Empire respond to them?

We had and still have four main estates: the clergy, the nobility, the merchantry (the big and middle bourgeoisie) and the peasant-

ry. The petty urban bourgeoisie constitutes under the name of the *meshchanstvo* a special, fifth estate, but under Nicholas its rights differed but little from those of peasants who did not belong to landowners. The *meshchane*, like the "state" peasants, were in a state of real serf dependence in relation to the state.

The clergy was and still is divided in Russia into the black (monks) and white (parish) clergy. The highest church dignitaries are appointed *only* from the monks; persons belonging to the white clergy proceed no further than the office of priest. Vast wealth is concentrated in the hands of the black clergy; the white clergy is very poor. Neither the one nor the other was *directly* interested in the peasant reform: at that time the clergy no longer had the right to possess "serf souls". But the white clergy, generally speaking, gladly welcomed the collapse of a system under which the bishops themselves were imbued with a militant spirit and instilled a truly military discipline in the ecclesiastical sphere. Moreover, the enlivening of social life caused by the reforms opened up entirely new paths to the children of persons belonging to the white clergy.\* In university student circles and even in the literature of that time the "seminarists" (the children of the clergy) played a most outstanding and most radical role.

The interests of the nobility were fundamentally affected by the "emancipation" of the peasants. Only the most ignorant and backward landowners were actually opposed to the abolition of the archaic institution of serfdom. But for all of them the question of *under what conditions* this abolition was to take place was of cardinal importance. The landowners' party supported, as already mentioned, the emancipation of the peasants without land, to which the government could not agree. Hence the oppositional mood of the nobility. "The tsar's big crown is made up of our small crowns; by breaking *our* crowns the tsar breaks his own," said the landowners. The majority repeated these words like a malicious prophecy. But among the nobility was a liberal minority which did not object to the emancipation of the peasants in accordance with the government's plan but wanted to bring "all the rest of the Russian State into harmony with the revolution which has been effected, and for this, after revealing with a merciless hand all the disgraces of our administration, courts, finances, etc., to demand the convocation of the Zemsky Sobor [Assembly of the Land], as the sole salvation of Russia, in a word, to show the government that it must continue the work *which it has begun*".\*\* In February 1862 the Noblemen's Assembly of the Tver Gubernia pronounced itself in favour of the convocation of the

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\* As we know, in Russia celibacy is not only not required of the white clergy, but quite the reverse, persons belonging to it are required to marry.

\*\* From I. S. Turgenev's letter of October 8, 1862 to Herzen.

Zemsky Sobor in an address to the emperor. Drafts of similar addresses circulated among the nobility in other gubernias as well. There was even the idea of a joint address signed by persons from different estates. The government had little difficulty in crushing the constitutional desires of the nobility. The slaves emancipated by it would have reduced to nothing all the efforts of their former slave-owners at a word from it.

The merchantry—the middle and big bourgeoisie—greeted all the “Emancipator’s” reforms joyfully. It sensed that now its time was coming, and was not disposed in the slightest towards opposition.

About the mood of the peasantry at the time of the Crimean War we have already spoken above. Until the government proceeded with the abolition of serfdom, a constant growth and strengthening of peasant unrest could be expected. But when the work of “emancipation” *had already commenced*, the peasants patiently awaited its conclusion. The whole question was how they would react to the “freedom” which the government granted them. What if they were to demand a different, fuller freedom? It was this that the tsar, officials and nobles feared, and it was upon this that the *revolutionaries* of that time reckoned.

The revolutionary party of that time was recruited primarily from the so-called *raznochintsi* [non-gentry]. What is a *raznochinets*? In order to understand the derivation of this word, one must remember that in Russia the rights of the estates are hereditary only among the nobility, *meshchanstvo* and peasantry. As we know, the “rights” of the latter are to this day very similar to a total *lack of rights*. But this does not change matters. The son of a peasant, no matter what he engages in, remains a peasant, unless he receives a “rank” in state service or is “registered” as a merchant—which anyone can be who possesses enough money to pay for a guild certificate—or unless he is “registered” with the *meshchanstvo* of this or that town. Likewise the son of a nobleman\* remains a nobleman, even if he ploughs the land or becomes a footman. This is not the case with persons belonging to the estates of the clergy and the merchantry. The son of a merchant remains a merchant only if he pays for a guild certificate. Otherwise he joins the ranks of the *raznochintsi*. Children of the clergy who do not elect to follow in their fathers’ footsteps also join the *raznochintsi*. The *meshchanstvo*’s lack of rights is just as hereditary as the nobility’s rights. But the diversity of occupations of the *meshchanstvo* brings the people of this “estate” close to the *raznochintsi*. The *raznochintsi* are *de facto* all people whose activity does not come within the framework of the estates.

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\* True, there are still “personal” noble officials in Russia. But the very term shows that their rights are not hereditary.

The *raznochintsy* stratum has always been large in number. Without it many functions of the state machine and the so-called public works would be impossible. But in the pre-reform period the *raznochinets* was very humble and extremely uneducated. Everywhere and always he had to give way to persons who possessed the rights of the higher estates. The reforms which followed the defeat of Sevastopol and engendered new social relations, created a position for the *raznochinets*. Now, as an engineer, barrister or doctor, he could ensure himself a position at least far more enviable than that of a rural junior deacon, for example. The *raznochintsy* flocked to the educational establishments, where the children of the impoverished small landowning nobility were also speeding.

The educated *raznochinets* did not possess the social gloss of the nobleman. He did not know foreign languages, and his literary education left a great deal to be desired. But he had at least one indisputable advantage over the idle nobility: compelled from early youth to wage a fierce battle for existence, he was incomparably more energetic. This quality of the *raznochinets* has occasionally given the Russian people a great deal of trouble and still does. The *raznochinets* official fights the "spirit of freedom" far more determinedly than an official from the nobility. The *raznochinets* landowner is more skilled at exploiting the poor peasant than a "lord" of the old type. But the same *raznochinets* fights the government far more determinedly and effectively when he adopts a negative attitude towards it. And he adopts such an attitude very often. Beaumarchais' Figaro says that rien que pour exister\* he had to use more wit than it took to govern all the Spains (pour gouverner toutes les Espagnes). The same might be said of himself by the Russian *raznochinets*, who moreover is dealing with a government far more despotic and uncereceremonious than a French government of the good old days. A man of "free profession", he needs freedom above all else, yet everywhere he encounters the unrestricted arbitrariness of the police. It is not surprising that the "negative trend" finds the most rewarding soil among the *raznochintsy*, and their "negation" is not limited to the witty, superficial backbiting characteristic of the nobleman. The elegant, well-educated and liberal nobleman *Turgenev* was right in calling him a "nihilist": he really does not stop at anything in his negation, which proceeds swiftly from words to deeds. The educated *raznochinets* is the herald of the new Russia, who has declared war on the old system and assumed the role of the first tirailleur in this merciless battle to the death.

Up to the end of the seventies the history of the Russian revolutionary movement was primarily the history of the struggle with

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\* [just in order to exist]

tsarism by this *stratum* of the population of Russia. Now new forces are coming to the aid of the *raznochinets*; now the battle is gradually being joined by the working class, the proletarians of physical labour, who are becoming increasingly numerous and already beginning to be aware of their political task.\* But at the time in question the fighters of this kind were still *in statu nascendi*\*\* in the full meaning of the word. They were not yet to be reckoned with, not yet to be counted upon. The *raznochinets* had to begin and conduct the struggle, as best he could, with his own forces.

Let us see under the banner of which ideas the liberation movement in Russia began. In the reign of Nicholas our literature dared not touch upon political and social questions. It confined itself of necessity to "belles lettres" and its criticism. In both belles lettres and criticism it went a very long way. At that time our Lessing—Belinsky—was in action, Gogol was writing his immortal works, our finest novelists had emerged and matured. To this day everything of distinction that is produced in our elegant literature and criticism stems from the literary heritage of the forties. But whereas our literary maturity was already beyond all question by that time, our political maturity was still a thing of the future. Socio-political questions were touched upon almost exclusively in the bitter dispute of the Slavophiles and the Westerners<sup>6</sup> about whether or not Russia should follow the path of European development. The Westerners said that she should, the Slavophiles argued that she should not and that Russia should create her own special civilisation under the aegis of a Graeco-Russian God and a purely Russian tsar. The subject of the dispute was most important; it produced many brilliant articles rich in content; but its final solution was impossible, firstly, because the censor did not allow the disputers to go further than the vaguest hints, and secondly—and this is most important—because neither side possessed the factual material necessary for proper elucidation of the question under dispute.

Progressive Russian people of Nicholas' day proceeded in their literary and political judgments from the philosophy of Hegel. For a certain time the famous German thinker was as much of an autocrat in Russia as the St. Petersburg Emperor. The difference was merely that Hegel's autocratic power was recognised only in philosophical circles which were small and few in number, whereas the power of Nicholas spread "from the cold Finnish cliffs to fiery Colchis".<sup>7</sup> It must be admitted that sometimes the Russians suffered more from Hegel than from Nicholas. The poorly understood, or, rather, completely misunderstood

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\* See P. Axelrod's excellent article "Das politische Erwachen", etc.

\*\* [in a state of being born]



teaching about the rational nature of all reality was something in the nature of the gendarmes corps instituted by Nicholas. But Nicholas' gendarmes could be hated, it was permissible to deceive them. How could a Russian Hegelian bring himself to deceive the spiritual gendarme appointed to keep watch over him, as he thought, by his voluntarily elected teacher? This was a real tragedy which ended in a revolt against "metaphysics" in general and Hegel in particular.

Russian "reality"—serfdom, despotism, the all-powerful police, the censorship, and so on, and so forth—seemed foul, unjust, intolerable to progressive people of Nicholas' day. They remembered with involuntary sympathy the then recent attempt of the Decembrists<sup>8</sup> to change this reality for the better. Yet they themselves—at least the most talented of them—were no longer content with either the abstract negation of the 18th century or the arrogant, egoistical, limited negation of the Romantics. Thanks to Hegel they had become far more exacting. They knew that history was a law-governed process, that the individual was quite helpless in situations when he came into conflict with the laws of social development. They said to themselves: prove the rational nature of your negation, find justification for it in the unconscious course of social development, or abandon it as a personal whim, a childish caprice. But to justify theoretically the negation of Russian reality<sup>9</sup> (by the inner laws of its own development meant to solve a problem which was beyond even Hegel's ability. Take, for example, Russian serfdom. To justify its negation meant to prove that it negated *itself*, i.e., that it no longer satisfied the social needs by virtue of which it had at one time come into being. But to what social needs did Russian serfdom owe its appearance? To the economic needs of a state which would have died of exhaustion without the serf peasant. Consequently, it was a matter of proving that in the nineteenth century serfdom had already become too poor a means for satisfying the economic needs of the state; that, far from satisfying them any longer, it was a direct obstacle to their satisfaction. All this was proved later in the most convincing way by the Crimean War. But, we repeat, Hegel himself would not have been capable of *proving that theoretically*. According to the direct meaning of his philosophy the conclusion was that the causes of any given society's historical development have their roots in its internal development. This correctly indicated the most important task of social science. But Hegel himself contradicted, and could not but contradict, this profoundly correct view. An "absolute" idealist, he regarded the logical qualities of the "idea" as the principal cause of any development. Thus the qualities of the idea turned out to be the radical cause of historical movement. And every time a great historical question towered before him, Hegel referred first of all to these qualities.

But to refer to them meant to leave the ground of history and voluntarily to deprive himself of any possibility of finding the actual causes of historical movement. As a man of tremendous and truly brilliant intelligence, Hegel himself felt that there was something wrong and that, properly speaking, his explanations explained nothing. Therefore, paying due tribute to the "idea", he hastened down to the concrete ground of history to seek the real causes of social phenomena no longer in the qualities of ideas, but in the ideas themselves, in the very phenomena that he was investigating at the time. In so doing he often made surmises that were truly brilliant (noting the *economic* causes of historical movement). But these surmises of genius were all the same no more than surmises. Having no firm systematic basis, they played no serious role in the historical views of Hegel and the Hegelians. That is why, at the time they were pronounced, hardly any attention was paid to them.

The great task pointed out by Hegel to the social science of the nineteenth century remained unfulfilled; the real, internal causes of the historical movement of humanity remained undiscovered. And it goes without saying that it was not in Russia that the man capable of finding them could appear. Social relationships in Russia were too underdeveloped, social stagnation held too tight a hold on the country for these unknown causes to emerge on the surface of social phenomena in Russia. They were found by Marx and Engels in the West, under completely different social conditions. But this did not happen till some time later, and during the period of which we are speaking the Hegelian negators there, too, became involved in the contradictions of idealism. After all that we have said, it is easy to understand why the young Russian followers of Hegel began by completely reconciling themselves with Russian "reality", which, to tell the truth, was so infamous that Hegel himself would never have recognised it as "reality"; unjustified theoretically, their negative attitude to it was deprived in their eyes of any reasonable right to existence. Renouncing it, they selflessly and disinterestedly sacrificed their social strivings to philosophical honesty. But on the other hand, reality itself saw to it that they were forced to retract their sacrifice. An hourly and daily eyecore to them by its infamy, it *forced them* to aspire to negation at any cost, i.e., even to negation not founded on any satisfactory theoretical basis. And, as we know, they yielded to the insistence of reality), they adopted a hostile attitude to it, no longer enquiring whether or not this was consistent with the spirit of Hegelian philosophy. The Russian Hegelians revolted against their teacher and proceeded to pour ridicule on his "philosophical cap"<sup>10</sup> until recently so venerable in their eyes. This revolt, in the circumstances of the time, was undoubtedly a most praiseworthy affair. But it must not be forgotten that, in revolt-



ings of Marx and Engels, is a certain movement towards scientific socialism to be detected in Russia. At the time in question, i.e., the beginning of the reign of Alexander II, even the most talented representatives of revolutionary thought in Russia did not go and could not have gone further than utopian socialism.

As we know, utopian socialism was quite incapable of setting any definite political tasks whatsoever for the proletariat, which it saw only as an oppressed and suffering mass, unable to take its affairs into its own hands. Politically this was the weakest aspect of utopian socialism, which stands out most clearly in the history of the whole socialist movement in its pre-Marxian period. In Russia this weak aspect of utopian socialism showed itself in the fact that its supporters were constantly vacillating in their attitude to tsarism and still are. Sometimes they thought they should "let the dead bury their dead" and concern themselves only with the realisation of their more or less socialist "ideals", ignoring everything that bore even the slightest resemblance to "politics". Sometimes, on the contrary, they dreamed of "*purely political*" conspiracies, calming their socialist conscience with the idea that the Russian "people" always was and always would be a "born communist" even without socialist propaganda. This pleasant conviction was supported by the existence in Russia of the village commune with its periodic re-allotment of land, which was discovered—after being pointed out by the Slavophiles, incidentally—by the German Haxthausen.

"The materialist doctrine that men are products of circumstances and upbringing, and that, therefore, changed men are products of other circumstances and changed upbringing," wrote Marx in the spring of 1845, "forgets that it is men who change circumstances and that the educator must himself be educated. Hence, this doctrine is bound to divide society into two parts, one of which is superior to society (in Robert Owen, for example)."<sup>11</sup> The Russian supporters of utopian socialism were constantly putting themselves *above* society in their programmes, as a result of which they suffered many failures and disappointments.

The reader will understand that the words of Marx's quoted by us relate not to modern dialectical materialism, which is closely connected with the name of Marx himself, but to old, metaphysical materialism, which was unable to take an *historical* view of both nature and social relations. This materialism began to spread very widely in Russia at the end of the fifties. The names of Karl Vogt, Büchner, and Moleschott acquired a most revered renown, whereas the names of the German idealist philosophers became synonymous with all manner of reaction. Hegel in particular now aroused the animosity of the "thinking proletariat" of Russia. However, this was the extreme, to which the most educated representatives of the above-mentioned "proletariat" did not go. People

who were familiar with the history of German philosophy continued to respect the great thinker in Hegel, although they were now very far from admiring his philosophy. For such people the main authority in philosophy was Feuerbach at that time. Feuerbach is incomparably higher than Vogt or Moleschott. He instinctively sensed the defects of the materialism advocated by them. But he could not overcome these defects critically. He did not reach the dialectical view of nature and society. "He takes his start from man; but there is absolutely no mention of the world in which this man lives; hence this man remains always the same abstract man who occupied the field in the philosophy of religion. For this man is not born of woman; he issues, as from a chrysalis, from the god of the monotheistic religions. He therefore does not live in a real world historically come into being and historically determined. True, he has intercourse with other men, however, each one of them is just as much an abstraction as he himself."\* Clearly it was not the philosophy of Feuerbach which could reveal to the educated Russian *raznochinets* of the late fifties the weak aspect of utopian socialism. At that time no one in Russia had advanced beyond Feuerbach. The historical views of Marx and Engels were still entirely unknown there. Darwin's work on the origin of the species was translated into Russian shortly after the English original appeared.<sup>13</sup> But "thinking proletarians" used it [Darwin's theory] exclusively as a weapon in the struggle with religious superstition. It did not eliminate the one-sidedness of the metaphysical materialism which has taken root deeply and for many years to come in the heads of "thinking proletarians".

We would note, finally, that the economic knowledge not only of the reading Russian public, but also of the most educated Russian writers of the forties was extremely limited. Belinsky never touched upon economic questions in his articles, and Herzen died believing that Proudhon was a great economist. In the early sixties political economy became a positively fashionable science in Russia. But enthusiasm was no substitute for positive information, and the first steps of this science were necessarily directed towards *utopianism*.

Engels says somewhere that German socialists of the utopian period were helped by "love" to overcome all manner of theoretical difficulties. Love rendered many services of this nature to Russian "thinking proletarians" as well. Where "love" was of no avail, a helping hand was provided by that abstract "reason" which is a distinctive feature of all periods of enlightenment (*Aufklärungsperioden*). From the viewpoint of this reason the most confused social questions were solved very easily and quickly. Pushkin writes that he knew a highly-placed elderly Russian noblewoman

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\* F. Engels, *Ludwig Feuerbach*, p. 29 of the Russian translation.<sup>12</sup>

who in her youth<sup>1</sup> had seen the famous French revolutionary Romme. "C'était une forte tête," she said, "un grand raisonneur; il vous aurait rendu claire l'apocalypse."\* Our enlighteners of the beginning of the reign of Alexander II were also such "fortes têtes" and "grands raisonneurs". They would have explained the apocalypse just as well as Romme and, like him, would never have thought of regarding it from an historical point of view.

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Such was the historical environment in which N. G. Chernyshevsky lived and acted. Let us now see how he lived, and, most important, how he acted.

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\* ["He was a clever man, a great philosopher; he could have explained the apocalypse to you."]

## N. G. CHERNYSHEVSKY

[1890]

*"My life and yours belong to history; hundreds of years will pass and our names will still be dear to people, who will recall them with gratitude when those who lived with us are no more."*

(From Chernyshevsky's letter to his wife written on October 5, 1862 in the Fortress of SS Peter and Paul.)

Nikolai Gavrilovich Chernyshevsky died on October 17, 1889. Our "legal" publications accompanied him to the grave with a few brief and chilly obituaries. These obituaries marked the end of the literary wake for a writer whose activity constituted a whole epoch in the history of our literature. Having said two or three words about him in a timid, stammering voice, our "independent" press—we shall not speak here of the "protective" press—appears to have forgotten all about him, as if it were in a hurry to move on to more interesting subjects. From the point of view, for example, of the foreigner who knows Russian and is familiar with Russian literature this would probably have seemed very strange. True, praise the Lord, we no longer have a single journal which could be called fully sympathetic with the aspirations and views of the late Chernyshevsky. Russian thought has advanced so far by comparison with the late fifties and early sixties, and we have now become so sober, moderate and prudent, that the celebrated author of the novel *What Is To Be Done?* may seem to us no more than a gifted, but too impractical and even somewhat dangerous dreamer. Now we know that what needs to be *done* is by no means what Chernyshevsky wished to do. He discussed socialist themes, but we think it enough to defend the self-ruination of the Zemstvo and save the tail-end of the village commune from the kulak's teeth. Thus, made wise by experience, we have become appeased. But this is not all. The main thing is that now we *do* things (when we do anything) quite differently from *the way in which* Chernyshevsky *did*. We hasten slowly, and he does not appear to have heard of this wise rule. He occasionally took such incautious steps, permitted himself such thoughtlessly bold expressions, that the mere recollection of them now, after almost thirty years have elapsed, is enough to give a sober, prudent, liberal or moderately radical "so-and-so" a touch of the fever. All this is so, all this is beyond question. But one does not need to share a writer's views and aspirations totally in order to devote a few quires in a journal to an

appreciation of his activity. For this it is sufficient to know that in his time, for this or that reason, he played an important role in literature. What liberal "so-and-so" could approve of Katkov's views? Yet was not a great fuss made of him after his death? Or, perhaps, the activity of Mikhail Nikiforovich Katkov deserves more attention than the activity of Nikolai Gavrilovich Chernyshevsky? Have we really become so prudent as to think such things?

The explanation is far more simple. Nikolai Gavrilovich Chernyshevsky was the victim of the most malicious, most relentless persecution by the government. Speaking of *victims*, our "independent" press, for all its well-tryed prudence, cannot help but utter a few bitter truths to the *butchers*. Yet since the censor's ferula is in the hands of these very butchers, it is not surprising that our periodical publications have thought it better to avoid the ticklish subject altogether. "Don't fight the strong," says the wisdom of our people, and in this case the wisdom of the Russian press agrees with it entirely.

But one cannot help regretting the coincidence of these two wisdoms. It would be instructive to compare the present age and the age gone past and show the reader plainly, by an analysis of Chernyshevsky's works, how far we are now from the false doctrines of this socialist and revolutionary. Having convinced himself of this, the reader would once more thank heaven for the rapid development of Russian social thought.

We who write abroad are touched only indirectly by the censor's ferula, through the intermediacy of various diplomatic "pressures". Moreover the very reason why we write abroad is that we have not yet managed to acquire a sufficient degree of prudence and we persist in thinking there is nothing wrong with occasionally giving battle to the strong and reminding the butchers of their victims. This is why we have considered it our duty in the very first issue of our journal to give as far as possible a full and impartial assessment of the literary activity of N. G. Chernyshevsky.<sup>16</sup>

Pleasant as the performance of this duty was for us, it was also by no means easy. We make no mention of the inadequacy of our powers for such an important matter. This goes without saying. But, furthermore, we would ask the reader to remember that there is still no full collection of Chernyshevsky's works. The articles by him which have been published abroad (by Mr. Elpidin and in part by Mr. Zhemanov) do not constitute even half of what he has written. Consequently we were compelled to turn to the original source, i.e., to the journal *Sovremennik*<sup>16</sup> to which Nikolai Gavrilovich contributed for the main part. Everyone knows that it is no easy matter to obtain old Russian journals abroad. We have been able to overcome this difficulty only partially. We could not obtain the *Sovremennik* for some of the years, in which Chernyshevsky wrote for it. On reading those issues of



it which we did manage to obtain, we encountered a new difficulty. Very many of Chernyshevsky's articles—all those in the sections "new books", "politics" and "literature" (Russian and foreign)—were printed without a signature. We were therefore obliged to combine the work of a critic with that of a bibliographer and to read unsigned articles with the aim of determining from the language and methods of exposition the likelihood of their belonging to N. G. Chernyshevsky. Obviously doubts and even errors were possible here. However distinctive Chernyshevsky's literary manner is and however easy it is for anyone who has read carefully even a few of his works to recognise his style, with respect to certain articles we could not decide whether they belonged to him or to someone else. In general we have avoided references to doubtful articles of this kind. Only in one case, which is indicated in the appropriate place, did we decide to deviate from this rule, referring to an article which may not, in fact probably does not, belong to our author, but which is extremely important for an assessment of the views of the *Sovremennik* circle on the social question. All the other articles quoted by us are undoubtedly written by Chernyshevsky, as anyone who takes the trouble to read them will see without difficulty.

After this essential, but not very interesting reservation we could, it would seem, get on with the business. But, as ill-luck would have it, another reservation presents itself to us. We should like to apologise to the reader for the fact that our critical essay will begin with a rather long quotation. Who does not know that such introductions are both ugly and pedantic? But we have reconciled ourselves to this fact, because our quotation provides a good explanation of our attitude to the matter. When business and pleasure conflict, one often sacrifices pleasure to business whether one likes it or not. Incidentally, we have taken this quotation from a good source, from the very author whom we are about to discuss, namely, from his *Essays on the Gogol Period of Russian Literature*.

"If for each one of us," he says in these *Essays*, turning to the criticism of the Gogol period, "if for each one of us there are subjects so close and dear to the heart that, in speaking of them, a person tries to impose coldness and calm upon himself, tries to avoid expressions in which his excessively strong love would be heard, knowing in advance that, while observing as much coldness as is possible for him, his speech will be very impassioned—if, we say, for each one of us there are such subjects dear to the heart, then the criticism of the Gogol period holds one of the first places among them, on a level with Gogol himself.... For this reason we shall speak of the criticism of the Gogol period as coldly as possible; in this case loud-sounding phrases are useless and offensive to us: there is a degree of respect and sympathy,

at which all praise is rejected as something which does not express the whole fullness of one's feelings." We regard the brilliant critic of the Gogol period, V. G. Belinsky, with the same profound esteem and the same ardent affection as the author of the *Essays* in question felt for him. In this respect we cannot detract from the quotation, or add to it. But we would note that at the present time N. G. Chernyshevsky himself is an object of equally ardent affection and equally profound esteem for every Russian socialist. For this reason we shall follow his own example and, in speaking of him, try to remain as cold and calm as possible, for, indeed, "there is a degree of respect and sympathy, at which all praise is rejected as something which does not express the whole fullness of one's feelings".

## I

We do not propose to write a biography of N. G. Chernyshevsky. There is not yet sufficient material to do so. We still have very scant information about his life. The little that we do know about him from this point of view is contained in a biographical sketch appended to the foreign edition of his works (see the pamphlet *Lessing*<sup>16</sup> and the second edition of the novel *What Is To Be Done?*). This sketch is very brief. But it does contain some chronological data, and, what is more important, documents relating to the trial of Chernyshevsky. Naturally we shall make use of this information, supplementing it with certain facts borrowed from our author's own writings. But all this is far, far too little, and it is therefore to be hoped that persons who know more than we do about Chernyshevsky will print their reminiscences of him as soon as possible, and also letters and papers of his in their possession. By so doing they would perform a great service to both the public and literature.

In the meantime, however, we must content ourselves with the information at our disposal. And this is basically as follows. Nikolai Gavrilovich was the son of a priest at the Saratov Cathedral and was born in 1829.<sup>17</sup> He was educated first at the Saratov Seminary and later at St. Petersburg University, where he graduated from the philological faculty in 1850. For some time after this he was a teacher at the Second St. Petersburg Cadet Corps, and then at the gymnasium in Saratov. There, in his native town, he soon married, if we are not mistaken, the sister of the now very well-known scholarly writer Pypin.<sup>18</sup> But the young Chernyshevsky evidently found the stagnant air of the provinces oppressive, and by 1853 we find him back in St. Petersburg, where he again taught in the Second Cadet Corps, and also translated and reviewed new books for *Otechestvenniye Zapiski*,<sup>19</sup> then published by Krayevsky and Dudyskin. We would hardly be wrong in

assuming that our author had to endure much privation and hardship in this transitional period of his life. At that time he was a simple literary unskilled labourer, and as we know unskilled labour is by no means richly remunerated in our literature. Chernyshevsky never possessed any other sources of income. But he was young, healthy and not afraid of any work, any effort. Apart from the literary work essential for earning a living, he was also working on his master's dissertation, on "the aesthetic relation of art to reality". The very choice of subject for the dissertation shows sufficiently clearly what tasks he was setting himself in his future activity. With his education, abilities, unparalleled diligence and remarkable gift for expounding the most dull and difficult subjects in a way that was comprehensible to all, he could have been sure of a brilliant academic career. Had he but wanted it, he would probably have obtained a professorial chair. But he wanted something different. He was attracted by the activity of the critic and publicist. For all the strictness of the Russian censorship, everyone remembered the example of Belinsky who, in spite of the censorship barriers, not only succeeded in putting into literary circulation a multitude of the most important truths, but also placed our criticism on an entirely new theoretical basis. We already know what ardent affection and profound esteem Chernyshevsky had for this writer. It is not surprising that he wanted to follow in Belinsky's footsteps, in order to continue the latter's cause to the best of his ability. Moreover, the career of Emperor Nicholas was obviously drawing to a close, the bankruptcy of his system was becoming clear to all, so that in the new reign one could expect a certain political thaw and somewhat less strictness from that

*Sanctimonious female drip,  
Our most prudish censorship*

as Pushkin called it. Budding writers thus had reason to hope for a somewhat better future. Finally, Nikolai Gavrilovich had very original views on the tasks of people who wished to devote their labours to the good of Russia. By virtue of these views he could not attach great importance to the purely academic activity of his fellow-countrymen. In the *Essays on the Gogol Period of Russian Literature* already quoted by us, he expresses himself most definitely on this subject. "Many of the greatest scholars, poets and artists," he says, "had in mind the service of pure science or pure art, and not any exceptional requirements of their homeland. Bacon, Descartes, Galileo, Leibnitz, Newton, and today Humboldt and Liebig, Cuvier and Faraday worked and work, thinking of the benefit to science in general and not of what is necessary at a given time for the welfare of the particular country which is their homeland.... As members of the intellectual world,

they are cosmopolitans." But the members of the intellectual world in Russia, to his mind, are not in such a position. They cannot yet be cosmopolitans, i.e., cannot think of the interests of pure science or pure art. In this respect, in keeping with the conditions of their country, they have to be "patriots", i.e., to think first and foremost about the special needs of their homeland. In this respect the ideal "patriot" for Chernyshevsky is Peter the Great, the man who set himself the aim of bringing Russia all the blessings of European civilisation. Chernyshevsky thought that even in his own time this aim was still far from being fully achieved. "Up till now for a Russian the only possible service to the noble ideas of truth, art, and science is to promote their dissemination in his homeland. With time we too, like other peoples, will have thinkers and artists who act purely in the interests of science or art; but until our education is on a level with that of the most progressive nations, each of us has another cause dearer to his heart—the promotion, as far as possible, of the further development of that which was begun by Peter the Great. This cause demands today and will probably demand for a long time to come all the intellectual and moral forces which the most gifted sons of our homeland possess."\* It was to the dissemination in his homeland of the noble ideas of truth, art, and science that Chernyshevsky wished to devote his powers.\*\* How he understood them could, in fact, be shown from an analysis of his writings. But before proceeding to such an analysis, we should like to describe his general point of view and show his attitude to his literary predecessors. Having done so, we shall be able to evaluate this or that of his individual views without great difficulty. It is all the more convenient for us to do this now because we are still dealing with the period of his life when he was not yet taking a particularly active part in literature, but was engaged in working out his views, in mastering and analysing "the noble ideas of truth, art, and science".

Of all his literary predecessors Chernyshevsky had the greatest respect for V. G. Belinsky and his circle. One might think, therefore, that he was brought up on the writings of Belinsky and his circle, that he derived his understanding of the ideas of truth, science and art from this source. This, however, is not quite the case. Although in his writings Chernyshevsky does not touch upon the history of his intellectual development, he makes one slight reference to Dobrolyubov which can throw some light upon it. We are referring to a letter written by him after Dobrolyubov's death in response to an article by a certain Mr. Z...n and printed in the February issue of the *Sovremennik* for 1862. In his article

\* See *Sovremennik*, 1856, Book 4, Criticism section, pp. 29-31.

\*\* [See below the addendum to this passage for the German edition, p. 157 et seq. of this volume.]

Mr. Z...n said, *inter alia*, that the late Dobrolyubov had been a disciple of Chernyshevsky's and was very strongly influenced by him. Chernyshevsky denied this passionately, even very angrily, saying that Dobrolyubov had arrived at his views quite independently and was far superior to him both in intellectual powers and in literary talent. We do not need to determine now to what extent this modest statement corresponded to the real state of affairs. All that interests us now in Chernyshevsky's letter is the following passage. After recalling that Dobrolyubov knew French and German and could therefore acquaint himself with the finest literary works of France and Germany in the original, Chernyshevsky says: "If, however, a gifted Russian in the decisive years of his development reads the books of our common great Western teachers, then books and articles written in Russian may please him, may delight him ... but under no circumstances can they serve as the most important source of the knowledge and concepts which he derives from reading."\* This is perfectly true. But Chernyshevsky also knew foreign languages, and also read the books of our common great Western teachers in the decisive years of his development. One may therefore assume that he too could only be delighted by certain articles and books written in Russian, but that for him too they were not the original source of his concepts and knowledge. The question now is what was that original source? In what literatures and in what branches of these literatures must it be sought?

In the thirties and forties one of the most important aids for our young people in the decisive years of their development was German philosophy. In the following decades this was no longer the case. In the fifties the attitude towards German philosophy in Russia was, it would seem, simply one of indifference. In the sixties people began to regard it with hostility and contempt. German philosophy was declared to be "metaphysics" on which "thinking realists"<sup>20</sup> should not waste their time. Of the West-European philosophers only the Positivists were recognised as worthy of indulgence. The war against German philosophy has been waged so successfully in Russia that our "thinking realists" can pride themselves on their victory over "metaphysics"; with justifiable pride they can say that they do not have the slightest idea about German philosophy. But neither Chernyshevsky, nor his closest friends, belonged to these victorious realists. They were interested in German philosophy and studied its history carefully. Its development and condition at that time undoubtedly influenced them most strongly, as it had influenced Belinsky's friends also. But which of the German philosophers was likely to interest Chernyshevsky?

\* "By Way of an Expression of Gratitude, a Letter to Mr. Z...n", *Sovremennik*, February 1862.

Not Fichte, Schelling or Hegel, of course. Belinsky may have been interested in them at one time, but for him too the systems of these philosophers, in the second half of his critical activity, were already, as the Germans say, ein überwundener Standpunkt.\* This can be said even more of Chernyshevsky. During the decisive years of his development, philosophy had already parted company forever with all forms of idealism. But if this was the case, which of the German philosophers could have had the greatest influence on him? Let us look for a hint of a reply again in his own writings. In his "Polemical Gems", written in response to the *Russky Vestnik*<sup>21</sup> and *Otechestvenniye Zapiski*, which had strongly attacked his whole trend in general and his article "The Anthropological Principle in Philosophy", Chernyshevsky says categorically that the system which he regards as right "is the latest link in a series of philosophical systems" and that it "emerged from Hegel's system, just as the latter emerged from Schelling's". From that people familiar with the history of philosophy will already see about which system he is talking. For those for whom the matter is still unclear, however, we shall quote a few more lines. "...Probably you would like to know who this teacher is that I am talking about?" Chernyshevsky asks Dudyszhkin in the same article. "To help you in your inquiries I will tell you that he is not a Russian, not a Frenchman or an Englishman, not Büchner, not Max Stirner, not Bruno Bauer, not Moleschott, not Vogt. Who is it then? You begin to guess...." And indeed, one cannot fail to guess. Chernyshevsky is talking about Feuerbach. The very name of the only philosophical article written by Chernyshevsky points to Feuerbach: Feuerbach was the first to speak of the *anthropological* viewpoint in philosophy. We could quote from Chernyshevsky's articles a great deal of evidence of the profound respect with which he regarded Feuerbach. For him Feuerbach was not inferior to Hegel, and this says a great deal, because Chernyshevsky considered Hegel one of the most brilliant thinkers. Thus, the philosophical viewpoint of our author has been found. As a follower of Feuerbach, Chernyshevsky was a materialist. "The principle underlying the philosophical view of human life and all its phenomena," he wrote in the above-mentioned article "The Anthropological Principle in Philosophy", "is the idea, worked out by the natural sciences, of the unity of the human organism; the observations of physiologists, zoologists and medical men have driven away all thought of dualism in man. Philosophy sees him as medicine, physiology and chemistry see him. These sciences prove that no dualism is evident in man, and philosophy adds that if man possessed another nature, in addition to his real nature, this other nature would inevitably reveal itself

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\* [an old-fashioned viewpoint]

in some way, but since it does not reveal itself in any way, since everything that takes place and manifests itself in man originates solely from his real nature, he cannot have another nature." This requires no explanation.

## II

But it will do no harm to indicate the place which belongs to our author's teacher in the history of philosophy. Feuerbach's theory emerged from Hegel's theory. But Hegel was an idealist, Feuerbach a determined materialist. Feuerbach's main service is that in his person philosophy parted company with idealism once and for all. Here one must make a reservation, however. There were materialists before Feuerbach as well. In order not to go too far for examples, let us point to the French materialists of the end of the last century. The *Système de la nature* is a perfectly materialist book. But can one say that Feuerbach simply restored philosophy to the views of Baron Holbach and his friends? This would be wrong. The new materialism differs most considerably from the materialism of the end of the last century; this difference lies mainly in the actual *method of thinking*. Modern materialism—its best, most developed exponents, of course—employs a special method of thinking, which is called the *dialectical* method and which was far less characteristic of the French materialists of the last century than, for example, of the deist Rousseau. There is no need for us to explain to the reader what constitutes the special features of the modern dialectical method of thinking, for this has already been done by a person far more competent than ourselves. This is what Frederick Engels, a man who by his writings has done a great deal to promote the further systematic development of the views of Feuerbach, has to say on the subject.

"To the metaphysician, things and their mental reflexes, ideas, are isolated, are to be considered one after the other and apart from each other, are objects of investigation fixed, rigid, given once for all. He thinks in absolutely irreconcilable antitheses. 'His communication is "yea, yea; nay, nay"; for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.' For him a thing either exists or does not exist; a thing cannot at the same time be itself and something else. Positive and negative absolutely exclude one another; cause and effect stand in a rigid antithesis one to the other." The dialectician does not reason thus. He "comprehends things and their representations, ideas, in their essential connection, concatenation, motion, origin, and ending". Therefore in his eyes all phenomena and all ideas assume an entirely different character than in the eyes of the metaphysician. He will not say, as the metaphysician does, invariably with a firmness which

does not allow of objection, that an object exists or does not exist at any given time. For everyday purposes the metaphysician is right, of course, but upon more careful, scientific inquiry he becomes totally confused, and then the triumph of the dialectician begins. "For everyday purposes we know and can say, e.g., whether an animal is alive or not. But, upon closer inquiry, we find that this is, in many cases, a very complex question, as the jurists know very well. They have cudgelled their brains in vain to discover a rational limit beyond which the killing of the child in its mother's womb is murder. It is just as impossible to determine absolutely the moment of death, for physiology proves that death is not an instantaneous, momentary phenomenon, but a very protracted process." Further, it is obvious to the dialectician that an object can perfectly well be itself and something else at the same time, for objects are constantly changing, and change is the very process through which an object ceases to be itself and becomes something else. "Every organic being is every moment the same and not the same; every moment it assimilates matter supplied from without, and gets rid of other matter; every moment some cells of its body die and others build themselves anew; in a longer or shorter time the matter of its body is completely renewed, and is replaced by other molecules of matter, so that every organic being is always itself, and yet something other than itself." In precisely the same way, the concepts of the positive and the negative, of cause and effect, have an entirely different meaning for the dialectician than for the metaphysician. "Further, we find upon closer investigation that the two poles of an antithesis, positive and negative, e.g., are as inseparable as they are opposed, and that despite all their opposition, they mutually interpenetrate. And we find, in like manner, that cause and effect are conceptions which only hold good in their application to individual cases; but as soon as we consider the individual cases in their general connection with the universe as a whole, they run into each other, and they become confounded when we contemplate that universal action and reaction in which causes and effects are eternally changing places, so that what is effect here and now will be cause there and then, and vice versa."<sup>22</sup>

If, after all that has been said, we take a look at the method to which the French materialists of the end of the last century adhered (and it must be remembered that method is the heart of any philosophical system), we see immediately how little they had in common with the modern materialists. In contrast to the latter, they must be called *metaphysicians*. To see this for himself, let the reader take a look, for example, at the above-mentioned book *Système de la nature* and note how Holbach and his friends deal with questions which they themselves have raised in the struggle with their opponents but which have not been solved



either by them or by contemporary science. These questions concern the main objects of human knowledge: the development of the universe, the origin of man and his various concepts, and, finally, the human relations in society. At the present time science—the natural sciences and history—is solving all these questions by means of the doctrine of *evolution*, i.e., essentially by means of the same dialectical method of which modern materialists speak, but about which even the most eminent scholars, indebted to it for their most brilliant discoveries, often do not have a clear idea. Holbach and his friends would seem to have set themselves the task of excluding the idea of evolution entirely from all their discussions. They regard objects outside their mutual relation, one after the other, and one independently of the other. Their communication really is “yea, yea; nay, nay”, and for whatsoever is more than these they regard as coming from evil. For this reason they have not only failed to solve many of the questions raised by themselves, but have not always remained true even to their own materialist point of view, often abandoning it for totally idealist arguments. In everything that concerns human relations and the history of human thought they are pure idealists devoid of scientific concepts. In their eyes the history of mankind is nothing more than the history of the errors of honest simpletons and the intrigues of mercenary-minded villains. Mankind suffered and lived in poverty because it was stupid and uneducated; but in the eighteenth century the sun of reason rose at last, and mankind will now become enlightened and, consequently, also happy—this is what their philosophy of history amounts to. But such a philosophy lacks the most elementary condition of science: *the concept of conformity to laws*. Mankind suffered from its lack of education and will cease to suffer thanks to the enlightenment brought by the eighteenth century.... This is all very well, but the question arises as to what caused mankind's lack of development in the preceding centuries and what produced the enlightenment of the eighteenth century? For it did not emerge from thin air. As materialists we do not recognise congenital ideas, but say that man's concepts are merely the mental reflections of the objects which surround him and the phenomena which take place before him. But if we adhere to this view, we should do so firmly and not forget about it as soon as we turn to the history of human thought. In this history we cannot speak of chance any more than we can of Divine Providence. These are totally unscientific concepts, totally unworthy of materialists. For the materialist the history of human thought is just as law-governed and necessary a process as the development of the solar system. So take the trouble to explain the course and conditions of this process, because if you explain the history of thought by the lack of development of thought, you are like the doctor who said: “Your daugh-

ter is unwell because she has fallen ill." But if you regard the history of human thought as a law-governed and necessary process, its successes will not appear to you as the prime and main cause of social development. You will perforce be compelled to recall the dialectical teaching on cause and effect, and you will say to yourself: Yes, cause and effect really do change place constantly; what is effect here, appears as cause there, and vice versa. The achievements of human thought undoubtedly influence human social relations decisively, but at the same time they themselves are dependent on these relations, making gigantic strides in one type of society and often stopping for a long time, if not for ever, in another. Moreover, this or that form of social relations does not arise because it seems to the members of the given society to be the most rational and just. Quite the reverse, people's belief in the justness and rationality of their social relations is very often a simple result of the fact that they have become accustomed to these relations, that they have been educated and grown up under their influence. How then do these social relations arise and develop? Their origin, development and disappearance in history is for the most part an unconscious process during which people group together in their struggle for existence. When the conditions of people's struggle for existence change, their social grouping changes too, and their social relations assume a new form, although very often people do not notice such a change at all or notice it only partially, or, finally, invent the most illogical explanations for it—for example, they cite the Divine commandments, the natural order of things, and so on. Hegel rightly remarked that in the history of social relations "Minerva's owl does not begin its flight until night-fall",<sup>23</sup> i.e., that people begin to reflect upon a given social order only when it has already had its day and is becoming useless and harmful under the new historical conditions. People then strive to establish a new order which in such cases almost invariably seems to them to be the most natural and rational, but which in fact has only one great advantage: it is the most suitable for people in the new, changed conditions of their struggle for existence.

Now it is natural to ask oneself on what the conditions of human struggle for existence depend and how they change. They are, firstly, provided by nature, and, secondly, created by people, but created by them for the most part unconsciously. The influence of geographical conditions—soil, climate, fauna, flora, the characteristics of the surface, the river systems, coastline, etc.—on the development of human societies has by now been more or less explained by science and does not require any examples by way of elucidation. But the character and nature of the conditions of the struggle for existence, which are unconsciously created by people themselves, still remain unclear to many. For this reason

an example here will not be out of place. Let us take a society in which a natural economy has already disappeared and products are produced for sale, for exchange on the market, i.e., in other words, they have become commodities. It goes without saying that producers reflect as little on the commodity character of their products, as Molière's bourgeois on the prosaic character of his everyday speech. They produce commodities not because commodity production seems the most natural and rational to them: they leave discussion of this to a special breed of men who are called economists. They themselves make their products commodities simply because in the given conditions they cannot help making them commodities. They put them on the market because they need to exchange them for other products essential to them. But these products, which lay in the workshop peacefully and quietly while they were simply products, begin to behave in a most peculiar and wilful fashion when they appear on the market and acquire the name of *commodities*. Sometimes this or that commodity "fetches a good price", and its producer rejoices. But sometimes suddenly, without any good reason, it begins to "fall off", it is little in demand, and its price falls. The producer hangs his head. And sometimes it happens that a given commodity is not bought by anyone, then woe to its producer, if he has not managed to set aside a little money for a rainy day! But the matter is not confined to such apparently random price fluctuations in a society of commodity producers. Little by little inequality begins to arise between them: one's business is better than the other's, and so one grows rich, and the other is ruined. Gradually this inequality—which, incidentally, is also a consequence of technical progress—reaches such a degree that a new commodity called labour power appears on the market. A section of the impoverished commodity producers can no longer continue production at their own expense and hires itself out to work for the employers. Thus, we now have employers and workers, the commodity society is becoming a *capitalist one*. Who created this capitalist society? Why was it created? Because it was considered the most rational and "natural" one? People created it because their mutual relations were the relations of commodity producers, from which capitalist relations subsequently developed. But they created it unconsciously: Ivan, Pyotr and Alexei did not reflect on the consequences which proceed from commodity production, they did not even reflect on the meaning of the commodity nature of production. However, Ivan, Pyotr and Alexei do not, as we have already acknowledged, have congenital ideas. Their way of thinking is created by the influence of their surroundings. Living in a capitalist society, they begin to think that it is good that they live in one, that people cannot live otherwise, that the capitalist order is the most "natural" and "just" one. And even this they think only in rare cases, but for the most part they do not think

about their social order at all: they take it for granted, without wondering whether it could be changed. Nevertheless the influence of the capitalist order is still felt in their way of thinking, in their feelings and habits. They do not arrange their concepts into a system. But their unsystematic, fragmentary concepts are permeated with the spirit of capitalism. It permeates everything: civil and state law, art and literature, the natural and social sciences. With regard to the social sciences, this is self-evident: the social sciences in a capitalist society are merely the elevation of capitalist relations into theory. As applied to the natural sciences our reasoning may seem very strange at first glance. How can people's views on oxygen or induction currents be permeated with capitalist spirit? But we do not say that they can. We simply wish to say that people did not always know about oxygen and induction currents. There was a time when they had no idea about them at all. When did they begin to take an interest in them? "The course of ideas corresponds to the course of things, all the sciences grew out of the social needs and requirements of the peoples," said a brilliant Italian long ago.<sup>24</sup> People's attention was directed at this or that sphere of natural phenomena in conformity with the needs of the society in which they lived. In all the sciences practice has invariably preceded theory and has never ceased to exert the greatest influence on it. What needs, what practice exist in a capitalist society? The needs and practice of a capitalist society, of course, and no other. These needs and this practice not only engender certain theories, they leave their mark upon them, sometimes impeding, sometimes accelerating their improvement. Say what you will, but the fact that the idea of the vast importance of the struggle for existence appeared among zoologists after the theoreticians of capitalism, economists, had elevated it into a principle is most characteristic.

But the capitalist system is not everlasting either. Gradually, under the influence of many causes, but again without *conscious* human participation, there appear in it very many inconveniences, very many negative and unfavourable aspects. The disadvantages of capitalism begin to outweigh its advantages. Its historical day is coming to an end. "Night" falls, and "Minerva's owl" flies out: the criticism of capitalist relations begins. People ask themselves: could not another order be introduced? Those who are particularly affected by the increasing inconveniences of capitalism reflect on this question more attentively and find to their amazement that another order not only can but must be introduced. The theories known as the harmful doctrines of communism and socialism arise. Under their banner gather all those who are deprived and oppressed by the existing order. But why was there none of this before? Surely the theoreticians of earlier times—all those great luminaries of knowledge, Petty, Smith, and Ricardo—were

not just cunning sycophants defending a cause which was profitable for only a tiny handful of fortunate people? Certainly not, they were honest thinkers, but how could you expect them to discover something which did not yet exist in reality? In their day historical movement had not yet revealed or, to be more precise, had not yet created the inconveniences of capitalism, against which the socialists are now fighting, and therefore they did not even suspect that they could arise. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof—this must never be forgotten in studying the history of human thought.

We shall perhaps be asked whether there does not exist a connection between the natural, geographical conditions of human development referred to above and those of its conditions which are unconsciously created by people in the process of production. This connection exists without a doubt. Man's economic development takes place under the influence of geographical conditions. It proceeds quickly or slowly and takes this or that direction precisely because of this or that character of the geographical environment of the society in question. In China and in Attica, in the plains of North America and on the banks of the Nile the forms of social relations at the initial stages of development were completely the same, one might say identical. The science of primitive institutions finds tribal life everywhere, for example. Mankind evidently has a single point of departure. But the natural conditions of the struggle for existence vary, and therefore the forms of human society take on a different character with the passage of time. The tribal life found everywhere gives way to the most varying social relations. The structure of Athenian society is unlike that of China; the course of economic development in the West is totally unlike the course of economic development in the East. Here, of course, a great deal depends on the influence of the historical environment surrounding the society in question, but the "geographical basis" of human development undoubtedly makes itself felt most strongly.

What is the point of all this, however? It is to indicate certain specific features of the new materialism, of which N. G. Chernyshevsky was a follower. We merely wished to say that the modern materialists interpret the course of historical development just as or almost as we have expounded it, whereas the materialists of the end of the last century completely lacked such an interpretation of history. There were still many vestiges of idealism in their world outlook. In their historical views, as we have said, they remained idealists to a large extent. They denied the existence of congenital ideas in the head of the individual, but they recognised, as it were, the spontaneous birth and development of ideas in human society. They did not even suspect that the historical development of human thought takes place under the influence of causes which

have nothing to do with human consciousness and will. Therefore it was only with the appearance of modern materialism that a scientific interpretation of history became possible. From the point of view of the new materialism "the history of mankind no longer appeared as a wild whirl of senseless deeds of violence, all equally condemnable at the judgment-seat of mature philosophic reason and which are best forgotten as quickly as possible, but as the process of evolution of man himself. It was now the task of the intellect to follow the gradual march of this process ... and to trace out the inner law running through all its apparently accidental phenomena".<sup>25</sup>

This task had to a significant extent already been solved by the works of Marx and Engels, the great socialists to whom it fell to continue the development of philosophical thought after Hegel and Feuerbach. But one must remember that we owe the materialist, i.e., the only scientific, interpretation of history to Marx and Engels (partly to the American writer Morgan as well, incidentally), and not to Feuerbach. In Feuerbach's day the aim of philosophical thought was a different one. It needed, first and foremost, to part company with idealism in all its forms and varieties. It was to this end that Feuerbach's powers were employed. Thus, his philosophical views must be regarded as only the first step of modern materialism. He provided certain premises only; other, essential premises, and a whole series of the most brilliant deductions from them, we owe to Marx and Engels. In Feuerbach's world outlook the historical aspect, which is the pride and strength of modern materialism, was not yet developed. What significance could this factor have in the history of the intellectual development of N. G. Chernyshevsky?

Reasoning in the abstract, one might perhaps think that he, as a man gifted with a fine, exceptional and very active mind, could have discovered the deficiencies and remedied the shortcomings in his teacher's views, i.e., in other words, do what Marx and Engels did. But, in order to make an epoch in the history of science, it is not enough to possess brilliant abilities, favourable external circumstances are also necessary to channel these abilities in the proper direction. How favourable were the circumstances surrounding our author in this respect? He lived in a country which was not developed in either the economic or the political sense of the word. Pure scientific and philosophical thought there were not distinguished by any great development either. No contribution by any Russian scholar has had a decisive influence on the destiny of European thought and science. We have seen how N.G. Chernyshevsky explained this phenomenon and what tasks he set the most gifted sons of his homeland. They amounted to the dissemination in it of the "noble ideas of truth, science, and art", elaborated in countries which had advanced

further than us along the path of civilisation. Chernyshevsky was perfectly right to set his fellow-countrymen these tasks, rather than any others. But the type of activity selected and recommended by him possessed an inner logic of its own, with which the most richly endowed people had to reckon. The disseminator of ideas elaborated by other people in other countries may, given great abilities, make a few individual, secondary discoveries, but he will not cause a revolution in science, because this is not what concerns him. This was the case with our author as well. His works contain many important observations which throw new light on various scientific questions. Such observations often coincide completely with the most important discoveries being made at that time in Western science. But these flashes of brilliant thinking are not worked out consistently, not systematised; therefore, in his writing we find alongside them views which even then could be regarded as obsolete and have now been completely abandoned by science. Thus it turns out that the shortcomings and deficiencies in the philosophy of the thinker who had the greatest influence on him were not remedied and corrected by him. In Chernyshevsky's materialist views the aspect which was little developed by his teacher remained undeveloped too. Generally speaking, Nikolai Gavrilovich did not arrive at the modern materialist interpretation of history, and where he approached it by the force of his intellect, he often gave it a rather naive form.

### III

Chernyshevsky's materialism is far more obvious in his "anthropological" than in his historical views. Regarding man as the involuntary product of his environment, Chernyshevsky adopts a most humane attitude even to those unpleasant manifestations of corrupted human nature in which idealists see only "evil intent" deserving strict punishment. "Everything depends on social customs," he argues, "and on circumstances, i.e., in the final analysis everything depends exclusively on circumstances, because social customs too, in their turn, also proceed from circumstances. If you blame a person—first try to see whether it is he who is guilty of what you are accusing him of, or the circumstances and customs of society—take a good look, for perhaps what lies here is not his guilt at all, but only his misfortune." The "protectors" chose to regard such statements by Chernyshevsky as a defence of loose morals, but, of course, in so doing they merely demonstrated their lack of understanding of the matter.

The inadequate elaboration of Chernyshevsky's materialist views is seen in certain aspects of his teaching on morality. For him, as for Helvétius, even the most self-sacrificing actions are only a special form of rational egoism. According to him, "it is

only necessary to examine more closely an action or a feeling that seems to be altruistic to see that all are based on the thought of personal interest, personal gratification, personal benefit; they are based on the feeling that is called egoism". Occasionally Chernyshevsky's reflections on this matter assume a somewhat strange character. "Lucretia stabbed herself after Tarquinius Sextus had raped her, but she too was prompted by self-interest." Then follows an argument to prove that her self-interested action was right. "Collatinus might have said to his wife: 'I regard you as pure and love you as before.' With the conceptions prevailing at that time, however, and prevailing with but little alteration today, he could not have proved his words by deeds; willy-nilly, he had already lost considerable respect and love for his wife. He might have attempted to conceal this loss by deliberately exaggerated tenderness towards her, but such tenderness is more offensive than coolness, more bitter than beating and abuse", etc. But it is most doubtful that Lucretia could have indulged in such hard-headed calculations just before her suicide. They require composure, and she could not be composed. Would it not be more correct to assume that in her action reason played a far smaller role than feeling which had developed under the influence of the social customs and relations of that time? Human feelings and customs usually adapt themselves to the existing social relations in such a way that actions committed under their influence may sometimes appear as the fruit of the most hard-headed calculations, whereas in fact they were not the result of calculation at all. In general, very noticeable in Chernyshevsky's views on rational egoism is the endeavour, characteristic of all "periods of enlightenment" (Aufklärungsperioden), to seek support for morality in reason and an explanation of the individual's character and behaviour in his more or less hard-headed calculation.\* But the words of Chernyshevsky quoted above contain a refutation of such extremes of reasoning. The actions of the individual are the result of social customs, and social customs are formed not under the influence of the calculations of reason, but by the historical development of society. To put the question properly it should be couched in these terms: what is the morality of the average individual? Is it the result of his calculation or the unconscious fruit of social relations? Finally, one must also ask by virtue of what influences of society on the individual can and does he develop an interest in the common good? Such questions are of great social importance. We see no need, however, to argue about what such an interest in the good of society should be called—altruism or noble egoism.

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\* [See below the note to this passage for the German edition, p. 159 of this volume.]



In conformity with the exaggerated importance attached by Chernyshevsky to human calculation, he sometimes explains historical events also by conscious calculation of advantage in cases where one should turn for an explanation of them to the forces of economic development of which people are unconscious. At first glance such explanations by Chernyshevsky may suggest that in his historical theories he had adopted the viewpoint of modern materialism. But a careful study of the matter reveals quite the reverse. Anyone who sees in human historical activity merely the influence of conscious calculation, is still very far from an understanding of the power and importance of economics. In fact its influence extends even to human actions and customs of different social classes with regard to which there can be no question of conscious calculation. We have already seen that the main, most influential factors of economic development up to now are beyond the influence of conscious calculation. We have seen also that all social relations, all moral customs and all intellectual inclinations are formed under the indirect or direct action of these blind forces of economic development. The latter also determine, incidentally, all forms of human calculation, all manifestations of human egoism. Consequently, one cannot speak of conscious calculation of advantage as the prime mover of social development. *Such* a view of history contradicts the teaching of modern materialism; *such* historical materialism is still very naive.

Chernyshevsky's historical views have not yet been systematised and often contradict one another. Without much difficulty one can select from his works and contrast views on history which seem to belong to entirely different writers. Contradictions of this kind cannot be explained by assuming a gradual change in our author's way of thinking. He embarked on literary activity at a point in his intellectual development when his views were already completely formed in the main. Therefore the contradictions and inconsistencies which we encounter in his historical views must be ascribed to the vagueness and shakiness of his general view of the history of mankind.

Here are a few examples by way of confirmation. In his *Outlines of Political Economy* N. G. Chernyshevsky, after explaining the laws of the "tripartite distribution of commodities" which exists in modern advanced countries and drawing a brief final conclusion from his explanations, expresses the following extremely interesting view on the inner springs of modern European history: "We have seen that the interests of rent are opposed to the interests of profit and workers' wages together. *The middle class and the common people have always been allies against the estate which receives rent.* We have seen that the interest of profit is opposed to the interest of workers' wages. As soon as the estate of capital-

ists and the estate of workers in joint alliance gain the upper hand over the class which receives rent, *the history of the country acquires as its main content the struggle between the middle estate and the people.*"\* Any modern dialectical materialist would willingly subscribe to these lines. All the more willingly, because the above-quoted view of Chernyshevsky's on the cause of the struggle between the "middle estate" and the "people" in another passage of his *Outlines* is explained further by pointing to the decline of small industry and small land cultivation and the inevitable triumph of large capitalist enterprises both in industry and in agriculture. In exactly the same way any modern dialectical materialist, with only certain reservations, would acknowledge the truth of the following view of Chernyshevsky's on the history of political and philosophical thought. "Political theories, and all philosophical doctrines in general, have always been created under the powerful influence of the social status to which their founders belonged, and every philosopher has always been a representative of one of the political parties which in his time contended for predominance in the society to which the philosopher belonged. We shall not speak of the thinkers who have made a special study of the political aspect of life. Their affiliation to political parties is only too obvious to everybody. Hobbes was an absolutist, Locke was a Whig, Milton was a republican, Montesquieu was a liberal after the English taste, Rousseau was a revolutionary democrat, Bentham was simply a democrat, revolutionary or non-revolutionary as circumstances demanded. It is needless to speak of writers like these. Let us turn to those thinkers who have engaged in building more general theories, the builders of metaphysical systems, to the so-called philosophers proper. Kant belonged to the party that wanted to enthrone liberty in Germany in a revolutionary way, but abhorred terroristic methods. Fichte went a few steps farther; he was not afraid even of terroristic methods. Schelling was a representative of the party that was terrified by the revolution and sought tranquillity in mediaeval institutions, that wanted to restore in Germany the feudal state that had been destroyed by Napoleon I and the Prussian patriots, whose spokesman Fichte had been. Hegel was a moderate liberal, he was extremely conservative in his deductions; but he adopted revolutionary principles for the struggle against extreme reaction in the hope of preventing the development of the revolutionary spirit, which served him as a weapon for the purpose of overthrowing that which was old and too antiquated. Our point is not that these people held such convictions as private individuals, that would not be so very important, but

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\* Our italics. *Outlines of Political Economy* (according to Mill), N. G. Chernyshevsky, *Works*, Vol. IV, p. 205.

that their philosophical systems were thoroughly permeated with the spirit of those political parties to which the authors of these systems belonged."\* Leaving aside the details of the views on this or that thinker, one can say in general that the words quoted reveal a most profound understanding of the social conditions under the influence of which the development of philosophical and political thought takes place. Modern dialectical materialists would have added only that the political struggle itself, which determined the direction of human thought, was waged, not for abstract considerations, but under the direct influence of the needs and aspirations of those classes or those sections of society to which the conflicting parties belonged. Chernyshevsky would hardly have objected to this. His views on the history of economic science express quite clearly an awareness of the dependence of human concepts on social surroundings. In his review of Roscher's book *The Principles of the National Economy*\*\* our author points to a "psychological law", by virtue of which "almost everyone—be he an ordinary man, an orator, or a writer, and be it in conversation, in speeches, or in books—regards as theoretically good, indisputable and everlasting all that is practically advantageous for the group of people which he represents. This psychological law must also be used to explain the fact that political economists of the Adam Smith school found the forms of economic life that dominated or sought to dominate at the end of the last and the beginning of the present century very good and worthy of constant dominion. The writers of this school represented the exchange or commercial estate in the broad sense of the word: bankers, wholesalers and industrialists in general. The present forms of economic organisation are advantageous for the commercial estate, more advantageous for it than all other forms; that is why the school that was its representative found that these forms were the best in theory.... When questions of political economy were taken up not by people who represented the estate for which the present economic forms are so fitting, but by representatives of the masses, another school appeared in the science, which, for some unknown reason, is called the utopian party."\*\*\* Here the awareness of the influence which the class struggle has on the development of science is expressed with remarkable clarity. But it would be most wrong to conclude from this that this awareness never left Chernyshevsky. There is a vast gulf between a simple understanding or acknowledgment of a certain principle and its consistent application throughout a whole system of views. While understanding perfectly the significance of the class struggle in human societies, Chernyshevsky

\* *The Anthropological Principle in Philosophy*, pp. 2, 3.

\*\* [*Die Grundlagen der Nationalökonomie*.]

\*\*\* *Sovremennik*, 1861, April, New Books, pp. 431-32.

nevertheless adhered to a view of "progress", which is far closer to Buckle's teaching than to the teaching of the new materialists. To give an idea of it, we shall quote a fairly long passage from his extremely interesting article "On the Causes of the Fall of Rome" written in connection with the publication of a Russian translation of Guizot's *Histoire de la civilisation en Europe*. In this article Chernyshevsky vigorously attacks the very widespread opinion that the Western Roman Empire fell because of its inherent inability to develop further, whereas the barbarians brought with them new seeds of progress. We do not wish for the present to examine whether our author was right in attacking this opinion. All that is important for us now is his view on the course of progress. Here it is. "Just think, what progress is and what a barbarian is!" our author exclaims. "Progress is based on intellectual development; its fundamental aspect lies precisely in the successes and spread of knowledge.... Mathematics develops, and this leads to the development of applied mechanics; the development of applied mechanics leads to the improvement of all manner of fabrications, crafts, etc.... Historical knowledge advances; this reduces the number of false notions that prevent people from organising their social life, which therefore becomes better organised than before. Finally, all intellectual labour develops man's intellectual powers, and the more people in a country who learn to read, who acquire the habit and love of reading books, the larger the number of people in it who are capable of running things properly, whatever they may be—which means that the course of all aspects of life in the country is improved. Consequently, the main force behind progress is learning; the achievements of progress are proportionate to the amount and spread of knowledge. So this is what progress is: the result of knowledge. But what is a barbarian? A man who is still wallowing in the deepest ignorance; a man who is half-way between a wild beast and a human being with the rudiments of a developed mind.... What good is it to society, if institutions, good or bad, but nevertheless human ones, possessing something that is in the slightest degree rational, are replaced by the customs of animals?"

As we see, there is no mention here either of the internal social relations in Rome which caused its weakness and which were pointed out by the very same Guizot in the first article of his *Essais sur l'histoire de France*, or the forms of communal life which determined the strength of the Germanic barbarians at the time of the conquest of the Western Empire. Chernyshevsky forgot even the famous words: *latifundia perdidere Italiam* (the latifundia were the undoing of Italy). In his formula of progress (as the phrase went in our country afterwards) there is no independent place for the internal relations of this or that "progressing" country. Everything is reduced to the amount and spread

of knowledge, and it does not even occur to him to wonder whether the history of knowledge does not depend on the history of the social relations of civilised countries. "It is said that a society found the established forms constricting," he argues further on, "which means that in the society there was a progressive force, there was the need for progress." But the need for progress is one thing, and the presence in society of a "progressive force" capable of satisfying this need is quite another. One must not confuse these two concepts, which are quite different in character and content: one of them is purely negative (the "need for progress" indicates merely the constricting nature of the existing forms), the other positive, for the presence in society of a progressive force capable of making the necessary change in the forms of communal life assumes a certain level of intellectual, moral and political development of the class or classes which are affected by the unfavourable aspects of these forms. If these concepts were identical, human progress would be an extremely simple matter, and we would not encounter in history the sorry spectacle of societies which have collapsed under the heavy weight of forms of communal life which, for all their indisputable harmfulness, could not be abolished because there was no vital forces in the people capable of doing so. It goes without saying that we are not speaking here of forms harmful to all classes of the society in question. Such forms abolish themselves, one might say. But more often than not it is other forms, unfavourable for the majority and very favourable for a privileged minority, which are particularly harmful for the further successes of the society. Such forms can be abolished only if the suffering majority possesses albeit the slightest ability to take independent political action. And it does not always possess this ability. This ability is by no means an inherent quality of the oppressed majority. It is itself created by the *economics* of the given society. It would seem that there was nothing more advantageous for the proletarians of Rome than to support the Gracchi draft laws. But they did not support them, nor could they have done so, because the social situation in which the economic development of Rome placed them not only did not promote their political development, but, quite the reverse, constantly lowered its level. As for the upper classes, firstly, it would be absurd to expect from them political action contrary to their economic interests, and, secondly, they were themselves being more and more corrupted by the influence of another aspect of the same course of economic development which was creating the Roman proletariat and at the same time turning it into a bloodthirsty and obtuse mob. Finally, things had come to such a pass that the Romans, those conquerors of the world, were unfit for military service, and the legions were reinforced with the very barbarians who eventually put an end to the existence of the Empire

which was half-dead already. Thus, contrary to Chernyshevsky's explanations, there is nothing accidental about the fall of Rome, for it was the natural end of an historico-economic movement which had begun long before.

We certainly do not wish to state, as many do, German writers in particular, that the Germanic peoples brought with them a special spirit and special inclinations, which ensured them pride of place in the subsequent history of mankind. We are saying merely that Rome's weakness in the struggle against the barbarians was caused and prepared by the course of its economic development, which destroyed the class of small landowners that had once constituted its strength. The small peasant holdings merged into huge latifundia inhabited by crowds of slaves. But slaves are a poor buttress for the state: brought from all over the world, of different races and tongues, they did not form a *people* in the true meaning of the word. They were and remained a *rabble* (if one can apply the term to a mass of people who have come together not of their own free will) and, of course, did not give a thought to the interests of the Roman state. Chernyshevsky remarks, it is true, that slavery was gradually modified in the Roman Empire, and was replaced towards the end by the *colonatus*. But, firstly, the instructions of the emperors concerning the *colonatus* were no more than the striving of the state to ensure that it received part of the *surplus product* created by the forced labour of the farmer. The transition to the *colonatus* could not alleviate his position radically at a time when all the sections of Roman society were literally *crushed* by state taxation and extortion.\* Secondly, it is obvious that colons<sup>26</sup> and adscripti<sup>27</sup> could not take the place of free farmers. Finally, even numerically the slaves and colons, at least in the villages, were inferior to the population of the old Italy of free farmers. Even Livy was amazed at how certain regions in Italy, where in his day only a few shepherds with their flocks were to be found, could have raised large and brave armies for the fight against Rome at the time of their independence. The explanation is simple: during their independence these regions lived under entirely different economic relations, to which they were indebted for their large, strong and vigorous population. At that time they still had strong tribal institutions which ensured the well-being of all members of the commune and gave them an independent and militant spirit. The Germans possessed the same institutions, and it was to them that the barbarian hordes owed their power and strength. In brief, one might say that towards the end of the existence of the Roman Empire economic relations prevailed in it which reduced

\* See the above-mentioned first article by Guizot in his *Essais sur l'histoire de France*; see also *Untersuchungen auf dem Gebiete der Nationalökonomie des klassischen Altertums* by Rodbertus.

its power of resistance to a *minimum*. Whereas the institutions of the Germanic peoples at that time increased their power of attack to a *maximum*. That is that: it is a matter of economics, not of any spirit or any mysterious qualities of race.

If, in explaining the historical fate of the different countries, we were obliged to confine ourselves to abstract considerations about their "progress" and about the amount of knowledge accumulated in them, we would never be able to understand the history of Greece, for example, where the more educated, "progressive" countries retire, one after the other, making way for less and less educated and "progressive" ones. How is such a phenomenon to be explained? By the course of development of economic and, mainly, land relations in Greece. In the more "progressive" countries this development led earlier to the concentration of landed property in a few hands, to a terrible increase in the number of slaves, and to the weakening and demoralisation of the lowest class of free citizens. The state power of the "progressive" Greek countries diminished in direct proportion to this phenomenon. In the less "progressive" countries this process began later and proceeded more slowly, and consequently their state power also declined more slowly, even increasing during certain periods of this process (as sometimes happened in the more "progressive" countries also); this is why they were able to play an outstanding role when the more "progressive" countries had completely declined under the pernicious influence of the class struggle, insoluble *at that time* (but not in our time when there is a solution for it). But the less "progressive" countries also declined eventually as a result of the process indicated; one after the other they sang their swan songs and disappeared, until finally the iron hand of Rome put an end to the independent existence of Greece. When the Romans came, *there was literally nobody to defend* the Greek countries, with a few exceptions. This fact was noted by Polybius and Plutarch.

In the historical views of our author a great deal of room is given to *chance* in general. Even our modern economic system, the character, laws and tendencies of which he explains fairly well according to the Smith-Ricardo school, is regarded by him as the product of historical chance. "History shows," he says in the above-mentioned review of Roscher's book, "that the present economic forms arose under the influence of relations which contradicted the requirements of economic science and were incompatible with both successes in labour and economy in consumption, in a word, that they are the result of causes hostile to both labour and well-being. For example, in Western Europe economic life was founded on conquests, on confiscations and monopolies."\*

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\* *Sovremennik*, April 1861, New Books, p. 434.

No one will say that conquests, confiscations and monopolies did not occur in the history of Western Europe. But they also occurred in Ancient Greece, in India, and in China, yet the economic structure of these countries was very different or still is from the economic structure of modern Europe. What created this difference? Was it not the fact that all these conquests, confiscations and "monopolies", far from determining the direction of economic development, were, on the contrary, themselves determined by it in their forms and subsequent social effects? The direction and course of the economic development of Ancient Greece, or India, or China was not similar to the direction and course of the economic development of mediaeval and modern Europe, hence the conquests too with all their consequences led to different systems there than in Western Europe. In view of the decisive importance which Chernyshevsky ascribes to conquest in the creation of the economic system of modern Europe, we cannot help recalling Engels' words: "Even if we exclude all possibility of robbery, force and fraud, even if we assume that all private property was originally based on the owner's own labour, and that throughout the whole subsequent process there was only exchange of equal values for equal values, the progressive development of production and exchange nevertheless brings us of necessity to the present capitalist mode of production, to the monopolisation of the means of production and the means of subsistence in the hands of the one, numerically small, class, to the degradation into propertyless proletarians of the other class, constituting the immense majority, to the periodic alternation of speculative production booms and commercial crises and to the whole of the present anarchy of production."\* This is how modern dialectical materialists see the matter. But Chernyshevsky saw it quite differently.

By attributing the different forms of economic life which existed in history to conquest and regarding them as opposed to "the requirements of economic science", our author naturally could not attach much value to their study. Familiar with the so-called historical method in economic science only from the works of such of its representatives as Wilhelm Roscher and other *Citaten-Professoren*,\*\* he regarded it most disparagingly and considered it the fruit of reaction against the emancipatory aspirations of the working class. "They inveighed against mediaeval institutions incompatible with the interests of the commercial estate ... in the name of reason; but then, as ill-luck would have it, people appeared who began to say: according to reason that which you want

\* «Развитие научного социализма», приложение, стр. 58 [Plekhanov is quoting from the Russian translation of Engels' *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*. Supplement 28].

\*\* [professors fond of quotations]



should exist, but in addition reason requires a great deal more, you are uttering only the beginning of the formula, but its end goes like this; in a word, the inconsistent thinkers were confronted with consistent thinkers.... What was to be done?... If reason speaks against you, reach out for history, it will come to the rescue." In keeping with such an origin of the historical method, the theoretical task of the advanced representatives of the working class, in their struggle against "inconsistent thinkers", was reduced simply to showing that the modern economic system arose from "conquests, confiscations and monopolies". This, according to Chernyshevsky, is what socialists do. In their hands "history denounces that which it has been invited to defend".\* But even before Chernyshevsky embarked on the path of literary activity, in the age of his predecessors, i.e., Belinsky and his circle, the finest theoretical representatives of the working class made use of history not only for polemical references to conquests and confiscations. Marx and Engels placed the study of the economic history of mankind on a firm scientific foundation, by showing its inherent necessity and strict conformity to laws.\*\* But everything indicates that Chernyshevsky was not familiar with this trend which grew out of the theories of his teacher Feuerbach, just as Feuerbach's theories grew out of Hegel's system.

Rejecting the historical method, our author made use in his economic studies of another method which he called the *hypothetical* method. We shall describe it in Chernyshevsky's own words. "This method," he says in his comments on book one of Mill's *Principles of Political Economy*, "is that when we need to determine

\* *Sovremennik*, April 1861, New Books, pp. 432, 433, 434.

\*\* Basing themselves on history, Roscher and those who shared his views oppose the revolutionary mode of action on principle. In their opinion *evolution* excludes *revolution* completely. This view is as erroneous as the view of some revolutionaries who oppose evolution. Both these extremes rule out entirely a correct interpretation of history. Armed with the *dialectical* method, the new socialists see the matter differently. For them evolution is as essential a *factor* in the process of the historical development of mankind as *revolution*. Evolution prepares revolution, revolution facilitates the further course of evolution. The "historical method", accepted by German scholars in particular, limits the field of vision of science quite arbitrarily to one of these factors, evolution, and therefore must be regarded as *anti-scientific*. One is still perfectly justified in saying today of its "scholarly" representatives what Marx said of them in 1844: "A school which legitimates the baseness of today by the baseness of yesterday, a school that declares rebellious every cry of the serf against the knout once that knout is a ... historical one, a school to which history only shows its *posterior* as the God of Israel did to his servant Moses .... For every pound of flesh cut from the heart of the people ... Shylock, but Shylock the bondsman—swears on its bond, its historical bond, etc."<sup>29</sup> All this is perfectly right. However, the revolutionary Marx, who denounced the servility of official representatives of the "historical method" in such forceful and apt terms, not only did not ignore historical evolution, but was the first to show its mainsprings and its strict conformity to laws.

the character of a certain element, we must put aside intricate tasks for the time being and look for such tasks in which the element of interest to us reveals its character most clearly, look for tasks of the very simplest nature. Then, having found the character of the element with which we are concerned, we can easily determine the role which it plays in the intricate task, which we set aside for the time being. For example, instead of the complex task: were the wars with France at the end of the last and the beginning of the present century profitable for England, one takes the simple question: can war be profitable not just for a handful of people, but for a large nation? Now, how does one solve this question? It is a matter of profit, that is, of an amount of prosperity or wealth, its decrease or increase, that is, values which are measurable by figures. But where can we obtain these figures? No historical fact can give us them in the form which we need, that is, in the simplest form, so that they depend solely on the element determined by us, war.... Thus, from the sphere of historical events we must turn to the sphere of abstract thought, which, instead of the statistical data offered by history, acts on abstract figures, the significance of which is conventional and which are chosen simply according to convenience. For example, it (abstract thought) operates as follows. Let us assume that a society has a population of 5,000, including 1,000 adult males by whose labour the society is maintained. Let us assume that 200 of them go to war. What is the economic relation of this war to the society? Does it increase or decrease the prosperity of the society? As soon as we have posed the question in such a simple form, the solution becomes so simple and incontrovertible that anyone can find it very easily and nobody and nothing can disprove it.... From the term 'supposition', 'hypothesis', the method itself is called the 'hypothetical method.'\*

Chernyshevsky adheres to this method in all his economic studies, which because of this acquire a very distinctive, extremely abstract character. As we know, the main economic work of our author is his part-translation, part-exposition of Mill's *Principles of Political Economy*, accompanied by very extensive remarks and special addenda. As one reads this work it is interesting to trace how the method of research adopted by its author constantly diverts him from the sphere of real, existing economic relations to the sphere of abstract thought. On that which concerns existing relations, Chernyshevsky rarely challenges Mill. He is for the most part content with the latter's analysis, which, as we know, leaves a great deal to be desired because of its vagueness and inconsistency. He does not disagree with Mill even on such

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\* N. G. Chernyshevsky, *Works*, Vol. III, pp. 89, 90, 91.

essential questions as those of value, price, money, the law of worker's wages, etc. Mill is perfectly right on that which concerns existing relations, Chernyshevsky usually says, but let us see whether they should be so, whether they are what is required by rational economic theory. "Let us assume", etc. is usually followed by a brilliant critique of existing relations, a critique which is, however, based entirely on completely abstract considerations and hypotheses. The defects of the method are thus glaringly obvious, and it would not, of course, be approved by any modern scientific opponent of capitalism, for these opponents now base themselves not on the requirements of abstract "theory", but on the inherent contradictions of the existing system, which in their further development are bound inevitably to lead to its abolition.

Readers familiar with the method of the philosophical school of which Chernyshevsky regarded himself as a follower, will note without difficulty that our author did not remain true to it in his studies. In fact, the "hypothetical method" has nothing in common with the dialectical method of Chernyshevsky's German teachers. To convince oneself of this it is enough to recall the characteristic features Chernyshevsky himself saw in Hegel's system, which engendered the teaching of Feuerbach. An indication of these features will help us greatly with the task of expounding and criticising Chernyshevsky's views. We would therefore ask the reader to pay the greatest possible attention to this matter, which may be dull and boring, but is certainly not without its uses.

In the eyes of the new dialectical materialists the greatest merit of Hegel's system and of the whole of German philosophy in general is that, to quote Engels, "for the first time the whole world, natural, historical, intellectual, is represented as a process, i.e., as in constant motion, change, transformation, development; and the attempt is made to trace out the internal connection that makes a continuous whole of all this movement and development".<sup>30</sup> With his enormous intellect and thorough grounding in philosophy Chernyshevsky could not ignore this aspect of the matter. He understood the immense importance of the Hegelian doctrine of development and even expounded it in vigorous, emotional language. "The constant change of forms, the constant rejection of form which has been engendered by a certain content or striving, in consequence of the strengthening of that striving, of the highest development of that content," he exclaims in his article "A Criticism of the Philosophical Prejudices Against Communal Land Tenure", "he who has understood this (great), constant, universal law, who has learned to apply it to all phenomena—oh, how calmly he takes chances which others fear to take! Repeating after the poet:

*Ich hab' mein' Sach auf Nichts gestellt  
Und mir gehört die ganze Welt...\**<sup>31</sup>

he has no regrets for anything that has outlived its time, and says: come what may, there will be merrymaking in our street!"\*\* But, as we can see, it was not this "great, constant, universal law" which he regarded as the main merit and most outstanding feature of Hegel's philosophy. At least, in his *Essays on the Gogol Period of Russian Literature*, discussing Hegel in detail in connection with the well-known interest which the circle of Stankevich and Belinsky took in Hegel's teaching, he pays most attention to another aspect of Hegel's philosophy. Here Hegel's main merit is seen to be his removal of philosophy from the sphere of abstract thought and his attentive attitude to reality. "To explain reality became the paramount duty of philosophical thought. As a result extraordinary attention was paid to reality, which had been formerly ignored and unceremoniously distorted in order to pander to personal one-sided prejudices.... In reality, however, everything depends on circumstances, on the conditions of place and time—and therefore Hegel found that the former general phrases with which good and evil were judged without examination of the circumstances and causes that gave rise to a given phenomenon—that these general, abstract aphorisms were unsatisfactory.... There is no abstract truth; truth is concrete, i.e., a definitive judgment can be pronounced only about a definite fact, after examining all the circumstances upon which it depends."\*\*\* In a note to the page in question Chernyshevsky clarifies this idea as follows: "For example: 'Is rain good or bad?' This is an abstract question; a definite answer cannot be given to it. Sometimes rain is beneficial, sometimes, although more rarely, it is harmful. One must enquire specifically: 'After the grain was sown it rained heavily for five hours—was the rain useful for the crop?'—only here is the answer 'the rain was very useful...' clear and sensible.... 'Is war disastrous or beneficial?' This cannot be answered definitely in general; one must know what kind of war is meant, everything depends upon the circumstances of time and place.... The Battle of Marathon was a most beneficial event in the history of mankind", etc. From this we can see that given a certain attention to reality even such an apparently simple question as that on the usefulness or harmfulness of war cannot be decided by means of this or that simple and completely abstract "hypothesis". Everything depends on the circumstances of place and time. This is perfectly true. But

\* [I took my chance on naught, and see—  
The whole world now belongs to me...]

\*\* N. G. Chernyshevsky, *Works*, Vol. V, p. 531.

\*\*\* *Sovremennik*, 1856, Book 9, Criticism, p. 12.

it is unfortunately also true that Chernyshevsky often forgot this both in his general studies and in his debates on such concrete phenomena as Russian communal land tenure.

We shall see below that the reality which he forgot frequently drew attention to itself in the most uncereceremonious fashion. But now we must continue the description of Chernyshevsky's historical views, which will help us determine the place belonging to our author in the general development of European philosophical thought.

#### IV

It is noteworthy that, while he did not attach any value to the historical point of view in the sphere of political economy, he considered it essential in the sphere of literary criticism. In one of his very first articles, the article on Aristotle's famous *Poetics* translated by B. Ordynsky, he ascribes to aesthetics the great merit of never having been hostile in Russia to the history of literature. "We have always proclaimed the necessity of the history of literature, and people who have especially engaged in aesthetical criticism have done a great deal—more than any of our present-day writers—for the history of literature. In our literature it has always been recognised that aesthetics must be based on an exact study of facts.... *The history of art serves as a basis of the theory of art.*"\* One would think that the person who wrote these lines, if he remained true to himself, should recognise without any reservations that the history of the economic development of mankind should serve as a basis of economic "theory". But we have already seen that he looked upon this "theory" differently.

The great accuracy of Chernyshevsky's view on the theory of art is explained, firstly, by the beneficial influence of his predecessors: after Hegel's *Aesthetics* and Belinsky's critical works (to mention but his articles on Pushkin) it was completely impossible to ignore the historical point of view in the theory of art. Add to this the fact that in aesthetic theory only the supporters of so-called art for art's sake, i.e., people who wanted to place "eternal" art apart from any connection with reality and its pressing, burning social questions, could object to the historical point of view. In fighting against such people, Chernyshevsky, naturally, had to incline towards the historical point of view on art, since it enabled one to link the tasks of art with the most important social aspirations of the given age. Schelling said that "verschiedenen Zeitaltern wird eine verschiedene Begeisterung zu Theil".\*\* By developing this idea it was easy to crush the sup-

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\* N. G. Chernyshevsky, *Works*, Vol. I, pp. 3-4.

\*\* ["Different generations are characterised by different enthusiasms."] *Ueber das Verhältnis der bildenden Künste zu der Natur.*

porters of "pure" art. In political economy it was a different matter. There the ossified Roscher and company were the opponents of the aspirations of the working class, which were so dear to Chernyshevsky. They were the only representatives of the historical point of view in political economy with whom he was familiar. It is not surprising that as a reaction against them he adopted an attitude to this point of view, the erroneous nature of which would have been glaringly obvious to him in other conditions.

It cannot be said, incidentally, that our author succeeded in developing consistently his view of the importance of the *history* of art as an essential basis for the *theory* of art. We have already seen that it is a long way from the mere acceptance of a certain principle to its consistent application in a corresponding branch of science. Chernyshevsky had a splendid opportunity to relate the theory of art to its history in his dissertation on "*The Aesthetic Relation of Art to Reality*", which he presented to the Philological Faculty of St. Petersburg University at the beginning of 1854 to obtain a Master's degree. This work occupies one of the most important places among our author's writings; for this reason all the merits and defects of his views and modes of thought are expressed extremely clearly in it. True to his materialist views, Chernyshevsky set himself the aim in his dissertation of putting an end to idealism in aesthetics. He tracks down idealism in all its aesthetic nooks and crannies from general theoretical questions on the origin of art and its importance in life to such details as the doctrine of the tragic and sublime. We shall quote here some of the theses advanced by him, as they throw into brilliant relief Chernyshevsky's materialist view on art.

"The true definition of beauty is: 'beauty is life'. To man, a beautiful being is that being in which he sees life as he understands it; a beautiful object is an object that reminds him of life....

"The sublime does not affect man by awakening in him the idea of the absolute; it hardly ever awakens it.

"To man, the sublime is that which seems to be much bigger than the objects, or much more powerful than the phenomena, with which he compares it.

"The tragic has no essential connection with the idea of fate or necessity. In real life the tragic is most often adventitious; it does not spring from the essence of preceding events. The form of necessity in which it is clothed by art springs from the ordinary principle of works of art: 'The denouement must follow from the plot', or else is due to the artist's misplaced surrender to the conception of fate.

"The tragic, according to the conception of recent European learning, is 'the horrible in a man's life'....

"Reality is not only more animated, but is also more perfect than imagination. The images of the imagination are only pale and nearly always unsuccessful imitations of reality.

"Beauty in objective reality is fully beautiful.

"Beauty in objective reality fully satisfies man.

"Art does not spring from man's desire to make up for the flaws in reality.

"The need that engenders art in the aesthetic sense of the term (the fine arts) is the same as that which is very clearly expressed in portrait painting.... By its reproductions, art merely reminds us of what in life is of interest to us and strives to acquaint us to some degree with those interesting aspects of life which we have not had occasion to experience or see in reality.

"Reproduction of life is the general characteristic feature of art and constitutes its essence. Works of art often have another purpose, viz., to explain life; they often also have the purpose of pronouncing judgment on the phenomena of life...."

With some of these theses one can agree only with certain reservations which give them a broader meaning. With one of them one cannot agree at all, namely, one cannot say that "the tragic, according to the conception of recent European learning, is 'the horrible in a man's life'". It is quite true that "the tragic has no essential connection with the idea of fate". But its connection with the idea of necessity is indisputable. Not everything that is horrible in a man's life is tragic. The fate of people upon whom the walls of a house in process of construction collapse, for example, is a horrible one; but it can be tragic only for those of them, and precisely for those of them, whose lives contained certain circumstances (great plans, broad political aspirations) which impart a tragic meaning to their accidental death from a pile of bricks. However, in the example quoted the tragic is still closely connected with the accidental, and therefore it is not tragic in the real meaning of the word. The truly tragic is based on the idea of *historical necessity*. Truly tragic is the fate of the Gracchi, the plans and very life of whom were ruined by the inability of the Roman proletarians to take independent political action. Truly tragic is the fate of Robespierre and Saint-Just, who perished because of the irresistible and inevitable contradictions in their historical position between the different classes of French society which were fighting for predominance. Generally speaking true tragedy is created by the clash of the conscious aspirations of the human personality, which is necessarily limited and more or less one-sided, with the blind forces of historical movement which act like laws of nature. Chernyshevsky did not and could not pay attention to this aspect of the matter, because his struggle against materialism was still limited to the sphere of abstract philosophical hypotheses. In this struggle he

again went to extremes of rationality and simply equated the tragic with the horrible. Whereas, had he recalled albeit the explanation of the tragic which Hegel gives using the example of Sophocles' *Antigone*, he would have seen that one can talk about necessity without being an idealist. Hegel points to the clash of two laws, tribal and state, in *Antigone*. The representative of the former is Antigone, and the representative of the latter is Creon. The struggle of these two laws has undoubtedly played a tremendous role in history, and without indulging in idealism one can connect the tragic with this type of struggle. Chernyshevsky does not see this, because he seems to forget about history in his study. This is all the more regrettable because if Chernyshevsky had remembered in time his own rule, that the theory of art should be based on the history of art, he might perhaps have succeeded in giving aesthetics a completely new theoretical basis. In arguing his thesis that beauty is life, he makes the extremely apt remark that different classes of society have different ideals of beauty depending on the economic conditions of their existence. This passage is so important that we shall quote it almost in full.

"Among the common people, the 'good life', 'life as it should be' means having enough to eat, living in a good house, and having enough sleep. But at the same time, the peasant's conception of life always contains the concept—work: it is impossible to live without work; indeed, life would be dull without it. As a consequence of a life of sufficiency, accompanied by hard but not exhausting work, the [peasant lad or.—*G.P.*] peasant maiden will have a very fresh complexion and rosy cheeks—the first attribute of beauty according to the conceptions of the common people. Working hard, and therefore being sturdily built, the peasant girl, if she gets enough to eat, will be buxom—this too is an essential attribute of the village beauty: rural people regard the 'ethereal' society beauty as decidedly 'plain', and are even disgusted by her, because they are accustomed to regard 'skinniness' as the result of illness or of a 'sad lot'. Work, however, does not allow one to get fat: if a peasant girl is fat, it is regarded as a kind of malady, they say she is 'flabby', and the people regard obesity as a defect. The village beauty cannot have small hands and feet, because she works hard—and these attributes of beauty are not mentioned in our songs. In short, in the descriptions of feminine beauty in our folk songs you will not find a single attribute of beauty that does not express robust health and a balanced constitution, which are always the result of a life of sufficiency and constant real hard, but not exhausting, work. The society beauty is entirely different. For a number of generations her ancestors have lived without performing physical work. In a life of idleness, little blood flows to the limbs. With every new genera-



tion the muscles of the arms and legs grow feeble, the bones become thinner. An inevitable consequence of all this are small hands and feet—they are the symptoms of the only kind of life the upper classes of society think is possible—life without physical work. If a society lady has big hands and feet, it is regarded either as a defect, or as a sign that she does not come from a good, ancient family.... True, good health can never lose its value for a man, for even in a life of sufficiency and luxury, bad health is a drawback. Hence, rosy cheeks and the freshness of good health are still attractive also for society people; but sickliness, frailty, lassitude and languor also have the virtue of beauty in their eyes as long as they seem to be the consequence of a life of idleness and luxury. Pallid cheeks, languor and sickliness have yet another significance for society people: peasants seek rest and tranquillity, but people who belong to educated society, who do not suffer from material want and physical fatigue, but often suffer from ennui resulting from idleness and the absence of material cares, seek the 'thrills, excitement and passions' which lend colour, diversity and attraction to an otherwise dull and colourless society life. But thrills and ardent passions soon wear a person out. How can one fail to be charmed by a beauty's languor and paleness when they are a sign that she has lived a 'fast life'.\*

People's concepts of beauty are expressed in works of art. The concepts of beauty of different social classes are, as we have seen, very different, sometimes even opposed. The class which predominates at a given time in society, dominates also in literature and art. It introduces its own views and its own concepts into them. But in a developing society different classes predominate at different times. Moreover, each class has its own history; it develops, attains prosperity and supremacy and, finally, declines. In conformity with this both its literary views and its aesthetic concepts change too. Therefore in history we encounter different literary views and different aesthetic concepts: the concepts and views which predominate in one age become antiquated in the next. Chernyshevsky showed that people's aesthetic concepts are in close causal connection with their economic life. This discovery was brilliant in the full sense of the word. All that remained was for him to trace the action of the principle discovered by him through the whole history of mankind with its alternation of different ruling classes, and he would have made a great revolution in aesthetics, by linking closely the theory of art with the modern materialist interpretation of history. But we know that such an interpretation of history was to a large extent alien to him. He could not, therefore, complete the matter which he had so brilliantly begun; and therefore in his *"The Aesthetic Rela-*

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\* N. G. Chernyshevsky, *Works*, Vol. I, pp. 44, 45, 46.

*tion of Art to Reality*" we find far fewer truly materialist comments on the history of art than, for example, in the *Aesthetics* of the "absolute idealist" Hegel.\* Chernyshevsky's dissertation, as we have already mentioned, reflects with special clarity all the defects and merits of his way of thinking.

## V

The Left wing of the Hegelian school, to which N. G. Chernyshevsky, like his literary predecessors, belonged, subsequently joined up, as we know, with socialism. The Russian Left Hegelians also joined up with it. Belinsky's passionate interest in socialism is well known. His works contain articles which reveal an understanding very profound for his time of the relations between the Western proletariat and the bourgeoisie.\*\* In this respect, as in all others, Chernyshevsky was the direct and immediate continuer of Belinsky's cause. It goes without saying that he went further than Belinsky. He not only *took an interest* in socialism, he also made a thorough study of the socialist and economic literature available to him. He spoke of socialism not only when it was relevant in articles devoted to other questions. His literary activity was aimed almost exclusively at disseminating socialist doctrines among the Russian reading public. In view of this we are obliged to give as detailed a description as possible of Chernyshevsky's attitude towards West-European socialism.

Anyone who talks about socialism today either speaks of the teaching of Marx or says nothing at all that is worthy of attention. At the time to which the decisive years of Chernyshevsky's development belonged (the late forties and early fifties) this was not yet the case. Marx's teaching by no means reigned supreme, it was still only being formed, elaborated and tested in the battle with other socialist theories. The main works of Marx's school had not yet appeared in print. It was still perfectly permissible to call oneself a socialist without having the slightest idea about Marx. The influence of the now so-called utopian socialists, particularly Fourier and Owen, was still strong. The gifted socialists of that time all felt this influence and supplemented their teachers' theories, removing the unscientific, fantastic elements from them. Chernyshevsky was in precisely this position. We have already said that he had no idea of the work

\* See, for example, Hegel's remarks on the history of Dutch painting with which any modern dialectical materialist could agree almost without reservation (*Aesthetik*, I. Band, 217, 248; B. II, 217-23). There are many such remarks in his *Aesthetics*.

\*\* See, for example, his article on Eugène Sue in Part VII of the complete edition of his works.

of Marx's school. True, even Belinsky read with great pleasure the Paris *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher*,<sup>32</sup> the first and last double issue of which was published by Arnold Ruge in collaboration with Marx and Engels. But the influence of this journal on the Russian public was not strong enough to determine a new direction in Russian socialist thought. The latter developed for a long time, a very long time, much longer than it should have, without the slightest influence of Marx's scientific works. It is not surprising that in elaborating his socialist views, Chernyshevsky did not take into account the new trend in socialism which had already played a considerable part in the history of the German working-class movement, and which from the second half of the sixties became predominant among the whole of the European working class. As a man with a good scientific education, Chernyshevsky was completely alien to the strange fantasies mixed in Fourier's teaching with brilliant views on the history and modern life of mankind. He was always extremely critical of the teaching of Saint-Simon. Robert Owen, the saintly old man, as Lopukhov calls him in the novel *What Is To Be Done?*, always appealed greatly to Chernyshevsky. But our author's sober mind rarely allowed him to delude himself with Owen's hopes for assistance to the oppressed majority from sovereigns and the upper class. Studying West-European social relations, Chernyshevsky, one might say, involuntarily arrived at the conclusion which subsequently became the corner-stone of the programme of the International and which says that the liberation of the workers must be a matter for the workers themselves. Nevertheless our author's view on the historical tasks of the working class shows a vagueness which may seem strange to the reader of our day. Chernyshevsky makes no distinction between the proletariat and the general mass of the suffering and oppressed people. To designate the working class which is to free itself by its own efforts Chernyshevsky uses an expression which is very characteristic of the Russian writer and which reveals the vagueness of his idea of the role of the proletariat in West-European history. Chernyshevsky calls the working class of the West *the common people* and conceives its needs and tasks in almost exactly the same way as an educated and humane Russian would have conceived the needs and tasks of the Russian "common people" of that time. In one of his articles written in the heat of the polemic provoked by the question of the emancipation of the peasants, our author even goes as far as to express the following strange ideas on the views of West-European democrats. He maintains that political freedom is of no importance for the mass of the people and that therefore defenders of the people's interests can remain indifferent to politics. Here is how he defines the political views of liberals, on the one hand, and "democrats", on

the other.\* "The fundamental desires, the basic urges, of liberals and democrats are essentially different. Democrats intend to abolish as far as possible the predominance of the upper classes over the lower in the state structure; on the one hand to reduce the power and wealth of the upper estates, on the other to give more weight and well-being to the lower estates. How to change the laws in this sense and to support the new structure of society *is almost a matter of indifference to them.*"\*\* On the other hand liberals cannot at all agree to give the predominance in society to the lower estates, because owing to their lack of education and their material poverty these estates are indifferent to the interests that are of the utmost importance to the liberal party, namely, the right to free speech and a constitutional system. For the democrat, our Siberia, where the common people are well off, stands far higher than England, where the majority of the people suffer great privations. Of all political institutions, the democrat is irreconcilably hostile to only one—aristocracy (but not absolutism?); the liberal almost always finds that only with a certain degree of aristocracy can society attain the liberal system. Therefore the liberals are usually the mortal enemies of the democrats, and say that democracy leads to despotism and is fatal to freedom."\*\*\*

The article from which we have borrowed these lines was written, as we have already said, at the very height of the polemic on the peasant question. It is highly possible that Chernyshevsky wrote it to some extent *ad usum delphini*,<sup>33</sup> wishing to show the Russian government that it need not fear the Russian democrats whose attention was indeed concentrated for a while entirely on the economic position of the emancipated peasantry. Later particularly in his *Unaddressed Letters*, Chernyshevsky expressed a new view on the importance of political freedom for the well-being of the people. But nevertheless the opinion quoted remains a very characteristic fact in the history of Russian political consciousness. It was bound to influence growing Russian democracy, which right up to the end of the seventies continued to have a profound contempt for "politics". Of course, this is explained not only by the influence of Chernyshevsky—the anarchic propaganda of Bakunin did a great deal in this respect. But the instability and vagueness of the political views of the young Russians' favourite teacher evidently made its contribution to the subsequent programme vagaries of the Russian revolution.

\* One must not forget that it was difficult to speak of the socialists because of censorship conditions.

\*\* Our italics.

\*\*\* "Party Struggles in France Under Louis XVIII and Charles X." Reprinted in the third issue of *Russkaya Sotsialno-Demokraticheskaya Biblioteka*, Geneva, 1875, pp. 5, 6.

ries. That Chernyshevsky's views on the political tasks of the West-European proletariat never showed any great clarity, can best be seen from the following opinion of his on the importance of universal suffrage. We are borrowing this opinion from the article "The July Monarchy" written in 1860, i.e., at a time when he was completely disillusioned with the government's treatment of the peasant question and could no longer write *ad usum delphini*. In this article, incidentally, Chernyshevsky addresses those "best people" who, having seen that the introduction of universal suffrage in France profited reactionaries and obscurantists, ceased to ascribe any importance to it. Chernyshevsky reassures them, but not with the consideration that reactionaries and obscurantists were able to profit from the result of universal suffrage only after the massacre of the June insurgents.<sup>34</sup> He does not tell them that universal suffrage is absolutely essential for the political education of the working class. He simply refers to the backwardness of the "peasants".... "The direct result of the decree (which introduced universal suffrage in France)," he says, "was contrary to the expectations of all honest Frenchmen. But what of it? Was not this decree nevertheless of some benefit to French society? People now saw that the ignorance of the peasants was ruining France. Until they had the vote, no one cared about this terrible calamity. No one noticed that at the basis of all the events of French history there always lay the ignorance of the peasants. The sickness was a secret one and remained without treatment; but it exhausted the whole organism. When the peasants appeared at the elections the essence of the matter was finally discovered. It was seen that nothing really useful could be achieved in France until honest men concerned themselves with the education of the peasants. This is now being done, and the endeavours are not entirely without fruit. Sooner or later the peasants will become more rational, and then progress will be easier for France. So let us be reassured: even if universal suffrage did not remain when legal institutions were restored in France, even if the bitter fruits brought by the decree on it made public opinion reject universal suffrage for a while, nevertheless the decree on it, for all its considerable direct harm, was indirectly of incomparably greater benefit."\*

Here, as we see, there is no mention of the class struggle in French society or of the revolutionary role of the French proletariat. All our author's hopes are placed on some honest men who will concern themselves with the education of the peasants, as a result of which "progress will be easier for France". This sounds very strange in our day. But again one must not forget that for

\* "The July Monarchy" in *Russkaya Sotsialno-Demokraticheskaya Biblioteka*, Geneva, 1875, pp. 58, 59.

Chernyshevsky the proletariat was the "common people", who differed little in their qualities, aspirations and tasks from other sections of the working population. If Chernyshevsky saw anything revolutionary in the specific features of the economic condition of the West-European proletariat, it was only in the sense that economic calamities provoke the discontent of the workers. But since the other sections of the working population also suffer no few calamities, a revolutionary mood among them seemed as natural to him as among the proletariat. When Chernyshevsky defended Russian communal land tenure, as one of the advantages produced by it, he mentioned the fact that it saves us from the "ulcer of proletarianisation". True, in so doing he evidently frequently recalled the words of reactionaries, such as Baron von Haxthausen or Tengoborsky who maintained that the "ulcer of proletarianisation" was the source of the revolutionary movements in Western Europe. He, too, had doubts about the advantages which the removal of the said "ulcer" would have for the cause of Russian progress. But he answered these doubts with the following type of remark: "The agricultural class, although it has always had use of the land under the communal system in our country, has not always appeared in Russian history with the same immovable character which is seen in it by Tengoborsky, who places too much trust in the general phrase about immovability being characteristic of the farmer in Western Europe, and has applied this unsubstantiated phrase to the Russian peasant. There is no need to discuss here the character of the West-European peasant. We would merely point out that the Cossacks came for the most part from the peasants and that from the beginning of the seventeenth century nearly all the dramatic episodes in the history of the Russian people were carried out by the energy of the agricultural population." Here the peasant wars are ranked, as we see, in terms of importance with the revolutionary movements of the modern proletariat—a confusion which would be quite impossible for the socialist of today.

In the eyes of the modern socialist the revolutionary movement of the working class are the result of the class struggle in a society which has grown up on the basis of large-scale industry. The modern socialist sees the further development of this industry as a pledge of the triumph of his cause. Chernyshevsky did not see the matter in this way. His views on it were strongly tinged with the most unambiguous idealism. Here is how he discusses the subject in his review of Bruno Hildebrand's book *Political Economy of the Present and Future*.\* "That which is truly human, truly rational, will find sympathy among all peoples.... Reason is the same at all latitudes and longitudes, with all black-skinned

\* [Die Nationalökonomie der Gegenwart und Zukunft.]

and fair-haired people. Naturally, in the American prairies there are different people from those in Russian villages, and the Sandwich Islands are inhabited by men who bear little resemblance to English gentlemen; but, we would think, the Russian peasant, the savage, and the highly revered Roman cardinal all want to eat, and in order to do so they must have something to eat. The urge to improve one's position is an essential quality of the whole of mankind. If the new theories conflicted with human nature, they would go no further than the country or the people who saw fit to invent them, and all the peoples of the educated world would not strive after them."\* It is hardly necessary to repeat that the peoples of the educated world are striving for socialism not because it accords with "human nature" (this proves nothing at all), but solely because it accords with the nature of the economic condition of modern civilised mankind.

With such views on socialism, how did Chernyshevsky conceive of the practical tasks of the socialist party? Due to censorship conditions he rarely spoke of them in the press, but he nevertheless expressed himself so definitely in this respect that only the details are open to question: the general nature of his practical aspirations is sufficiently clear.

Let us say, first and foremost, that Chernyshevsky with his sober mind and constant striving for practical activity could not belong to those socialists who demand that mankind should accept their utopias unconditionally and who regard all individual economic reforms as futile or even harmful. Such, for example, are the modern anarchists, if anarchists can be called socialists even in the colloquial, not the strict sense of the word. Chernyshevsky ridicules such visionaries caustically. "To reject in the name of higher ideals any, albeit not completely perfect improvement of reality is to idealise excessively and amuse oneself with fruitless theories." In his opinion, for people inclined to such amusements, "the matter usually ends, after strenuous attempts to reach up to their ideal, with them falling in such a way that they have no ideal at all in front of them". This really hits the nail on the head with regard to the modern anarchists. But that is not the point. Let us see how Chernyshevsky himself regarded reforms which are useful and possible from the socialist point of view.

It is well known that modern Social-Democrats not only do not deny the importance of individual economic reforms, but demand them most insistently. The programmes of individual reforms or so-called minimum demands adopted by them in the various countries are closely linked with their ultimate aspirations. They hope that the reforms won by them from modern

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\* *Sovremennik*, March 1861, New Books, p. 71.

governments will help them to approach their ultimate goal, that they will be a string of victories of the economy of Labour over the economy of Capital. Chernyshevsky realised that the reforms demanded by the socialists must conform to their ultimate goal. But he did not have such a clear idea of the ultimate goal of socialism as the modern Social-Democrats. In his mind the actual triumph of socialism was removed to the somewhat vague future and was supposed to be the result of mankind's "centuries of experience". Therefore even a programme of what he regarded as desirable individual reforms could not be a definite one. In general it can be said, however, that because Chernyshevsky saw socialism as a system of associations, he defended everything in which he saw even the slightest hint of the principle of association. It was from the point of view of facilitating the introduction of associations that Chernyshevsky defended Russian communal land tenure. He saw the commune as a ready-made historical basis for agricultural associations. He recommends the introduction of associations to Russian socialists in his novel *What Is To Be Done?* as well. It is most interesting to note the historical fact that associations were advocated simultaneously in Russia and in Germany. The year 1863 saw the appearance of Chernyshevsky's novel, the publication of which marked the beginning of a whole series of attempts in our country to set up production associations. Also in 1863 Lassalle recommended associations to German workers as the only means of improving their life to any degree. But what a difference in the way this question was raised in Russia and in Germany! In Chernyshevsky's novel, which for a while became the programme of the Russian socialists, it is separate, humane, educated individuals who concern themselves with the setting up of associations: Vera Pavlovna and her friends. Even the enlightened priest Mertsalov is enlisted to the cause, who, to quote his own expression, plays the role of a "shield" in the workshops set up by Vera Pavlovna. Not a word is said in the novel about the independent political activity of the class which is interested in the establishment of such associations. Nor did the people of the sixties, who attempted to implement the programme proposed by Chernyshevsky, say a word about it. Whereas the first word in Lassalle's agitation was to point out to the workers the need for them to engage in independent political activity. Lassalle demanded that the workers, after uniting in a special political party and acquiring influence over the course of affairs in the country, should force the government to give them the money needed to set up associations. In Lassalle's project the setting up of associations has a broad social character. Lassalle attached no importance whatsoever to associations set up by the efforts of enlightened individuals. By comparison with Lassalle, Chernyshevsky is a real utopian in his novel. By com-



parison with Chernyshevsky, Lassalle is a true representative of modern socialism in his agitation. This difference does not spring from the fact that Lassalle was intellectually superior to Chernyshevsky. One can say with confidence that in intellectual powers Chernyshevsky was by no means inferior to Lassalle. But the Russian socialist was the son of his country, the political and economic backwardness of which gave all his practical plans and even many of his theoretical views the character of utopias. In his practical plans for the establishment of associations he was far closer to Schulze-Delitzsch than to Lassalle. On the other hand, however, we would point out that Lassalle too in his practical plans is a true representative of modern socialism only by comparison with Chernyshevsky. The men who really were the true representatives and founders of modern socialism, Marx and Engels, believed that Lassalle's plans too were mere utopias. They refused to support the famous agitator precisely because they did not wish to cultivate in the German working class a taste for economic utopias.<sup>36</sup>

The decisive years of Chernyshevsky's development belong to the time when the West-European proletariat, dispirited after the Revolution of 1848, was not showing any signs of political life. Observing it from the side and not having had the opportunity of familiarising himself with the movements of the proletariat in the preceding age by personal observation, Chernyshevsky, naturally, had no reason to reflect on its historical role. Even acknowledging in principle that the proletariat should free itself by its own efforts, Chernyshevsky nevertheless sometimes inclined to extremely strange practical plans for easing its lot. In saying this, we have in mind an article printed in the May issue of the *Souremennik* for 1861, in the foreign literature section. It is most possible, even probable, that this article did not belong to Chernyshevsky himself. But since it concerns economic questions and since everything in the *Souremennik* that bore the slightest relation to these questions passed through Chernyshevsky's hands, it could obviously not have been printed if it contradicted the views of our author. In any case it must be acknowledged as most characteristic of the views of the *Souremennik* circle on the social question. At the beginning of the article the author makes some very valuable remarks to the effect that the proletariat is a phenomenon peculiar exclusively to modern history. "Only in the present century has it appeared in the west of Europe in the form of a conscious, independent whole. Before the nineteenth century there were, perhaps, more poor people in need of general assistance than today, but there was no talk of the proletariat. It is the fruit of modern history." Further on the author remarks correctly that female industrial labour will ensure the liberation of woman within the family. Reading this, one might think that

one was dealing with a person who had adopted the viewpoint of modern socialism. But disillusion appears as soon as the discussion turns to practical ways of improving the lot of the proletariat. Namely, discussing the Lyons silk-weavers, the author sees their salvation in the "decentralisation of production", the setting up of workshops outside the town, and the combining of weaving with agriculture. In the author's opinion, combining the handicraft of weaving with agriculture would greatly increase the well-being of the worker. He sees the cheapness of raw materials in the villages as another source of a possible improvement in the well-being of the weavers. Here are his actual words: "For the Lyons worker the beginning of his emancipation from his employer lies in organising his own workshop outside the town. But how can it be set up? On whose money? Employers and factory-owners can be relied upon only by way of an exception, so that is why it is necessary to seek support from the government, its money. Only with credit made available by the government to the Lyons proletariat will he free himself from the exploitation of his labour by the capitalist and acquire the possibility of standing on his own two feet." But the author fears that workers will not want to move to the villages. "Urban life for many of them offers pleasant features which they will not find in rural life.... But this is a transient evil. One cannot, of course, expect all workers to move out of Lyons immediately into the surrounding countryside; but nor are there any grounds for thinking that the advantage of such a move will not penetrate the general awareness of workers more and more. A few successful examples, and the worker will see the solution to his present unfortunate position. It will be enough to start with if some small holdings and workshops of individual families are formed, and then the transition to an association and to the setting up on communal funds of factories with power looms will not be difficult."\* We would not have been at all surprised to read such a plan in the works of Mr. Uspensky or any of the "subjective" Russian "sociologists".<sup>36</sup> But in Chernyshevsky's journal it creates a strange, painful impression. It is obvious that the person who thought up this plan and the people who printed it in their journal had no idea whatsoever as to how the liberation of the workers could be a matter for the workers themselves. For modern Social-Democrats the matter is perfectly clear: the *economic* emancipation of the proletariat will be the result of its *political* supremacy, its taking of political power into its own hands. The author of the above-mentioned plan for the economic emancipation of the Lyons weavers assigns the main role in this emancipation to the government of Napoleon III. According to this project, it was supposed to take the initiative

\* *Sovremennik*, 1861, May, Foreign Literature, pp. 22 and 23.

and gradually accustom workers to the idea of moving to the countryside. Thus the workers would be the passive object of the beneficial action of the Bonapartist government. This conflicts radically with the views of the Social-Democrats, to say nothing of the economic aspect of the project which does not bear any criticism. But the appearance of such projects on the pages of the *Sovremennik* was, if you like, understandable and natural. We have already seen how Chernyshevsky regarded universal suffrage. He did not consider it an essential instrument of the proletariat in its struggle with the bourgeoisie. A person who is unclear as to the importance of universal suffrage in this struggle, will also be unclear as to all its political tasks in general, and will not see the need for uniting the proletariat in a special political party with the aim of seizing power in the future. In such circumstances even the most sincere supporter of the working class is bound to hesitate when it is a question of practical measures for improving the workers' lot. He will sympathise deeply with their revolutionary movement; but in peace-time he will not decline to put the whole matter of improving their lot into the hands of existing governments: with an unclear understanding of the political tasks of the workers, he cannot understand clearly the importance of their *independent* political activity. In general, it can be said that a person's understanding of the modern tasks of the proletariat is revealed best of all in his opinions on the tactics of that class *in calm peace-time*. In order to sympathise with the revolutionary outburst of the workers, a person need only not be interested in supporting the bourgeois order. But, in order to have a clear idea of the tactics which the workers should employ at a time when there is no revolution and none in sight, a person must understand properly all the tasks, all the conditions and the whole course of the liberation movement of the working class. All this was not yet clear to Chernyshevsky; hence the appearance on the pages of the *Sovremennik* of projects like the one mentioned above.

It is interesting that our author, while vigorously defending state intervention in the economic relations of different social classes, nowhere mentions the restriction of the working day by law. He evidently did not attach any significance to this aspect of the matter or, rather, did not give any thought to it whatsoever.

We have now elucidated sufficiently the socialist views of N. G. Chernyshevsky. For readers familiar with the movement in the West and with West-European socialist literature it will, perhaps, be interesting to mention here the fact that our author saw Proudhon as "a complete illustration of the intellectual position that is reached by a common man in the West". Chernyshevsky is by no means an admirer of Proudhon. He sees his weak sides, his vacillations, his inconsistencies. But "in all this we

see again the common features of the intellectual position in which the West-European common man finds himself. Thanks to his robust nature and to his stern experience of life, the West-European common man understands the essence of things much better, more correctly, and more deeply than people of the more fortunate classes. But he has not yet grasped the scientific concepts which correspond most to his position, inclinations and needs, and that correspond most to the present state of knowledge."\* About which "common people" is Chernyshevsky speaking here? Has he in mind the peasants, the small, independent artisans or proletarians in the true sense of the word? He speaks about them in general, not making any distinction between the different sections of the working population, because all of them, as we have seen, have merged together in his mind into the single general idea of the "common people". Modern socialists see the matter differently. As early as 1848 Marx and Engels in their *Manifesto of the Communist Party* pointed to the great difference between the peasants and artisans, on the one hand, and the proletariat, on the other. For the authors of the *Manifesto* the peasants and small artisans, when they defend the economic features of their own position and do not adopt the point of view of the proletariat, are *reactionary for they try to roll back the wheel of history*.<sup>37</sup> Only in the proletariat do Marx and Engels see the truly revolutionary class of modern society. In keeping with this Marx and Engels could detect in Proudhon too, perhaps, the representative of the West-European common people, but common people placed in the special conditions of petty-bourgeois production. Proudhon's socialism seemed to Marx to be the socialism of the petty bourgeoisie or, if you like, of the peasants, these petty bourgeois of agriculture. Marx explained the inconsistency and vacillation of Proudhon's thinking not by the fact that he was not familiar with the latest advances in science, but by the fact that the prejudices and biases which he had brought from the petty-bourgeois environment made it impossible for him to understand these advances even if they reached him.\*\* The difference in the attitudes of Marx and Chernyshevsky to Proudhon demonstrates vividly the difference in their attitudes to the West-European working-class movement as a whole.

## VI

We now know Chernyshevsky's attitude to "our common great Western teachers" from whom the Russian must learn diligently even today. We know that German philosophy had an immense in-

\* *The Anthropological Principle in Philosophy*, pp. 21, 24.

\*\* See *The Poverty of Philosophy* (fifth issue of *Biblioteka Sovremennogo Sotsializma*).

fluence on the shaping of Chernyshevsky's views. We know also in which period of the development of German philosophy our author studied it: in the period of its transition from idealism to materialism. In this transitional period modern materialist views had by no means reached the stage of refinement, clarity and consistency to which the works of Marx and Engels subsequently elevated them. This had a most telling effect on Chernyshevsky's views. Comparing them with the teaching of the school which developed subsequently from the teaching of Feuerbach, we find in them many gaps, much vagueness and inconsistency. Chernyshevsky's historical and socialist views can by no means be regarded as satisfactory from the point of view of European science today. Anyone who chose to hold them at the present time would be completely out of date. But in saying this we certainly do not wish to censure the great Russian writer. His development was greatly hindered by the fact that he lived in a country which was backward in all respects and which the latest discoveries and trends in the social sciences often did not reach at all. In the circumstances which surrounded him there were no materials for independent discoveries in this sense. Moreover, one must remember that the revolution in social science brought about by Marx and Engels was not immediately fully appreciated even by the most gifted people in Western Europe. Lassalle was placed in conditions most beneficial for his social and political development, he was closely acquainted with the founders of modern socialism, and all he needed to do, it would seem, was master the ideas which had been elaborated by others and were quite comprehensible to him because of the circumstances of his life, and yet we find a multitude of glaring contradictions in his works. In his major works (*Philosophie Heracleitos des Dunkeln*, *System der erworbenen Rechte*) he is a downright idealist and talks about the *self-development of concepts* (*Selbstentwicklung der Begriffe*). In his agitational brochures he is already much closer to modern materialism, he acknowledges nearly all its theses almost entirely, but nevertheless in these brochures as well there is much vagueness and inconsistency. How much correction does his main polemic work *Bastiat-Schulze* require today!<sup>38</sup> Lassalle must also be regarded as a representative of the transitional age in the development of philosophical socialist thought, just as Chernyshevsky was. But the gaps and contradictions in Lassalle's views did not prevent him from rendering a great service to the development of his country. Nor did the incomplete formulation of Chernyshevsky's views prevent him from doing the same. Today, standing on Marx's viewpoint, we can criticise a great deal in Chernyshevsky's theoretical propositions and practical plans. But for his time and for his country even those of his views which we must now acknowledge as erroneous were extremely important and

beneficial, because they roused Russian thought and led it on to a path upon which it had not succeeded in embarking during the preceding period: the path of the study of social and economic questions. In political economy, in history, even in aesthetics and literary criticism Chernyshevsky expressed a multitude of important ideas which have still not been mastered in all their scope and properly developed by Russian literature. In order to define in a few words the importance of everything that Chernyshevsky did for the development of Russian thought, it should suffice to point to the following fact which anyone familiar with the state of literature over the last thirty years will acknowledge as indisputable. Neither the Russian socialists with their vast number of factions and trends, nor legal Russian critics and publicists have taken a single step, literally, a single step forward since Chernyshevsky's literary activity ceased. In his articles you will find the thoughts and views the dissemination of which constituted the fame of the progressive writers in the following period. These writers made no amendments to Chernyshevsky's views, and could not have done so, for all the shortcomings which marked Chernyshevsky's world outlook were characteristic of their world outlook to a far greater degree.<sup>39</sup> The weak side of Chernyshevsky's views was explained by the fact that he was unfamiliar with the latest trend in West-European philosophical thought, with the teaching of Marx and Engels. But did the leading writers of the following period master this teaching? They began to talk of the inapplicability of West-European theories to our country, of the "subjective method" in sociology, of the peculiarities of Russian economic life, of the errors of the West—in a word, they were more or less conscious, more or less zealous advocates of the Narodnik teaching which would probably have seemed most unpalatable mysticism to Chernyshevsky.\* Once they had strayed off to Narodism, the leading representatives of Russian thought could not even think of seriously criticising Chernyshevsky. On the contrary, they often defended, with a zeal worthy of a better fate, precisely those of his views which betrayed his errors and revealed his backwardness in

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\* Aristov in his book on Shchapov describes how Chernyshevsky became interested in Shchapov's works, sought his acquaintance, and, meeting him at the home of a mutual friend, had a long argument with him. This argument showed Chernyshevsky that Shchapov could not contribute to the *Sovremennik*: so strongly did their views diverge. But what was the attitude to Shchapov later of the very people who regarded themselves as ardent admirers of Chernyshevsky? Shchapov's views on Russian history were an integral part of Narodnik teaching, and our Narodniks, while continuing to "respect" Chernyshevsky, did not even take the trouble to ask themselves whether there was not a contradiction between his views and Shchapov's idealisation of old folk life.

relation to West-European science. How remarkable is the fate of brilliant or even simply gifted people who have had a marked influence on the intellectual development of their country! Their followers and admirers often assimilate their errors and delusions, and then defend them with all the enthusiasm roused by the great name. The history of the intellectual development of mankind positively abounds in examples of this, at first glance very strange, predilection of students for the errors of their teachers. What did the Right wing of the Hegelian school assimilate? The brilliant philosopher's blunders and inconsistency. What did the so-called positivists repeat with special persistence? The scholastic part of the teaching of Auguste Comte (readers will forgive us for the truly sacrilegious comparison of Comte with Hegel). What prevented the German Lassalleans from joining with the Liebknecht-Bebel faction? Their predilection for Lassalle's political errors and economic utopias. Without a doubt obscurantists have slandered the human mind, ascribing to it a constant striving forward and constant dissatisfaction with that which exists! In fact, it turns out to be the laziest of all conservatives.

But let us return to our author. Knowing the general character of his views, knowing the merits and defects of his characteristic interpretation of "the noble ideas of truth, science, and art", we can now easily form a picture of his literary activity.\*

We have already said that, while preparing his dissertation on "The Aesthetic Relation of Art to Reality", Chernyshevsky engaged in translation and other literary work, mainly for *Otechestvenniye Zapiski*. The appearance of his dissertation in print attracted the attention of the editorial board of the *Sovremennik*, published since 1847 by Nekrasov and Panayev. Chernyshevsky was offered a permanent post on the journal, and even the whole of the criticism section was put in his charge. Later, in 1859, when the *Sovremennik* was allowed to write about politics, Chernyshevsky also took charge of the political section. It will always be to the great credit of Nekrasov and Panayev that they did not shun, as many other "friends of Belinsky's" did, people who continued his cause. It goes without saying that the editorial board had no occasion to regret its collaboration with Chernyshevsky. Already in the December issue of the *Sovremennik* for 1855 there appeared the first article of the frequently mentioned series *Essays on the Gogol Period of Russian Literature*, one of Chernyshevsky's finest works and still the best textbook for anyone who wishes to acquaint himself with the criticism of the Gogol

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\* [See below the addendum to this passage for the German edition, p. 160 of this volume.]

period. The second article in this fine series of essays was printed in the January issue, the third in the February issue, and the fourth in the April issue of the *Sovremennik* for the following year. These four articles contain an appreciation of the literary activity of Polevoi, Senkovsky, Shevryyov and Nadezhdin. In the July issue the author turned to Belinsky, to whom the remaining five essays are devoted. In these articles the name of Belinsky was mentioned for the first time since 1848,<sup>40</sup> when Belinsky began to be regarded as a banned writer. With the appearance of the *Essays* it could be said with gratifying certainty and without the slightest exaggeration, that Belinsky had a worthy successor. From the moment that Chernyshevsky appeared as critic and publicist of the *Sovremennik*, this journal was again assured of the predominant place among Russian periodicals which had belonged to it during Belinsky's lifetime. The *Sovremennik* was heeded with interest and respect by the advanced section of the reading public, all fresh, budding literary talent was naturally drawn towards it. Thus, in the middle of 1856 the young Dobrolyubov began to write for it. It is difficult for people of our day to imagine how great the importance of journalism was then in Russia. Today public opinion has far outgrown journalism; in the forties it was still too young for it. The late fifties and early sixties were the age of the greatest concord between public opinion and journalism and of the greatest influence of journalism on public opinion. Only in such conditions was it possible to have the passionate interest in literary activity and the sincere belief in the importance of literary propaganda which one finds in all the eminent writers of that time. In brief, it was the Golden Age of Russian journalism. The unfortunate outcome of the Crimean War compelled the government to make a few concessions to educated society and effect at least the more pressing reforms that had long since become indispensable. Soon the problem of freeing the peasants was placed on the order of the day, a problem directly affecting the interests of all estates. Needless to say, Nikolai Gavrilovich eagerly set about elaborating this problem. His excellent articles on the peasants' cause were written in 1857 and 1858. How much was written by him on this subject can be seen from the fact that these articles make up a large volume of very small print in a separate foreign publication. The mutual relations of our social forces in the epoch of the abolition of serfdom are now fairly well known. We shall, therefore, mention them only in passing, only insofar as it may be necessary to elucidate the role adopted in this matter by our advanced publicists, chief of whom then was N. G. Chernyshevsky. It is well known that these writers zealously defended the interests of the peasants. Our author wrote one article after another, advocating the emancipation of the peasants with land



and maintaining that the government would find no difficulty whatever in redeeming the lands allotted to the peasants. He supported his thesis both with general theoretical considerations and with the most detailed estimates. "Indeed, in what way can the redemption of land prove difficult? How can it be too much for the people to bear? That is improbable," he wrote in the article "*Is Land Redemption Difficult?*". "It runs counter to the fundamental concepts of economics. Political economy says plainly that all the material capital which a certain generation takes over from previous generations is not too considerable in value compared with the mass of values produced by the labour of that generation. For example, all of the land belonging to the French people, together with all the buildings and their contents, together with all the ships and cargoes, all the livestock and money and other riches belonging to that country, is hardly worth a hundred thousand million francs, while the labour of the French people produces fifteen or more thousand million francs' worth of values annually, i.e., in no more than seven years the French people produce a mass of values equal to that of the whole of France from the Channel to the Pyrenees. Consequently, if the French had to redeem all France, they could do so in the lifetime of one generation, using only one-fifth of their revenue for the purpose. And what is the point at issue in our country? Is it the whole of Russia with all her riches that we must redeem? No, only the land. And is it to be all the Russian land? No, the redemption would affect only those gubernias of European Russia alone where serfdom is deep-rooted", etc.\* After showing that the lands to be redeemed would constitute no more than one-sixth of the area of European Russia, he puts forward as many as eight plans for carrying out redemption. According to him, if the government were to accept any one of these plans, it could redeem the allotted lands not only without burdening the peasants, but also to the great advantage of the state treasury. Chernyshevsky's plans were all based on the idea that it was "*necessary to fix the most moderate prices possible in determining the amount of redemption payments*". We know now how much consideration the government gave to the interests of the peasantry in abolishing serfdom and how much it heeded Chernyshevsky's advice regarding moderation in fixing redemption payments. Statistics show that on average the payments fixed on peasant lands greatly exceed the income which the lands yield. They also show that it is mainly the lands of the former landowners' peasants that are burdened with payments. Hence it is clear that whereas our government, in freeing the peasants, never for a moment forgot the benefits

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\* See the article "*Is Land Redemption Difficult?*" in the fifth volume of the foreign edition of N. G. Chernyshevsky's *Works*.

to the state treasury, it thought very little about the interests of the peasants. In the redemption operations it was exclusively fiscal and landowner interests that were borne in mind. And this is perfectly understandable, for no one has either the need or the desire to think of the interests of an estate (in this case the peasant estate) which cannot defend them vigorously and systematically itself. But at that time, when there were still only rumours of the emancipation of the peasants, the most advanced Russians thought somewhat differently. They believed that the government itself without great difficulty could understand to what extent its own advantages coincided with the interests of the peasants. Such hopes were, incidentally, nourished for quite a long time by Herzen. Chernyshevsky also nourished them. Hence the persistence with which he kept returning in his articles to the peasant question, and the diligence with which he explained to the government its own interests. But Chernyshevsky was the first Russian writer to understand the base and hypocritical role of the Russian government in the matter of peasant emancipation. Already in 1858 his article "*A Criticism of the Philosophical Prejudices Against Communal Land Tenure*" appeared with a most significant epigraph from *Faust*: "wie weh', wie weh', wie wehel!"\* This splendid article is usually regarded as a most vigorous and successful defence of communal land tenure, but we shall examine it from the viewpoint of the actual principle of freeing the peasant with land. The article shows that by 1858 Chernyshevsky had already abandoned all hope of a satisfactory solution by the government of the peasant land question. "I am ashamed of myself," he says at the beginning of the article. "Ashamed to remember the untimely self-assurance with which I raised the question of communal land tenure. This affair has made me reckless to put it bluntly, I have become stupid in my own eyes.... It is difficult to explain the cause of my shame, but I shall try to do so as best I can. However important I regard the question of retaining communal land tenure, it nevertheless constitutes only one aspect of the matter to which it belongs. As a high guarantee of the well-being of the people whom it concerns, this principle acquires meaning only when the other, low guarantees of well-being necessary to provide scope for the action of the principle are already given. Two conditions must be regarded as these guarantees. Firstly, the belonging of rent to those people who take part in communal land tenure. But this is not enough. It must also be pointed out that rent is only seriously worthy of its name when the person who receives it is not burdened with credit liabilities which result from its receipt.... When a person is not

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\* ["how painful, how painful, how painful!"]

fortunate enough to receive rent free of all liabilities, then, at least, it is assumed that the payment of these liabilities is not very large by comparison with the rent.... Only if this second condition is observed can people who take an interest in his well-being wish him to receive rent." But this condition could not be observed in the case of the emancipated peasants. Therefore Chernyshevsky thought it pointless to defend not only communal land tenure, but even the granting of land to the peasants. Anyone who still harbours any doubts on the matter will be totally convinced by the following example quoted by our author. "Let us suppose," he says, turning to his favourite method of explanation by means of a "parable", "let us suppose that I was interested in taking steps to preserve the provisions from the store of which your dinner is prepared. Obviously, if I did so out of affection for you, then my zeal would be based on the assumption that the provisions belong to you and that the dinner being prepared from them is nourishing and good for you. Just imagine my feelings when I learn that the provisions do not really belong to you and that for every dinner prepared from them you pay money which is not only more than the dinner itself is worth but which, in general, you cannot pay without extremely embarrassing yourself. What ideas will enter my head in the face of such strange discoveries?... How stupid I was to bother about a matter when the conditions for its usefulness were not guaranteed! Who but a dolt can bother about the preservation of property in certain hands, without first being assured that the property will fall into those hands and on advantageous terms?... Rather let all these provisions, which only cause harm to the person I love, be lost! Rather let the whole matter, which only causes your ruin, vanish!"\*

If the reader, not content with the passages quoted, would like to have an even clearer idea of how greatly and how early Chernyshevsky became disillusioned with peasant "emancipation", we would direct his attention to the novel *Prologue to a Prologue*, published in 1877 by the editorial board of the journal *Vperyod!* and written by Chernyshevsky, it would seem, considerably earlier than the novel *What Is To Be Done?*<sup>41</sup> *Prologue to a Prologue* is actually not a novel but the author's notes relating to the period of the abolition of serfdom. Well-known literary and political figures of the day appear under the fictitious names of Count Chaplin, Ryazantsev, Savelov, Levitsky, Sokolovsky, etc.<sup>42</sup> Moreover, under the name of Volgin Chernyshevsky portrays himself, and this gives his novel, or notes, great biographical

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\* See volume five of the Geneva edition of N. G. Chernyshevsky's *Works*, pp. 472-78.

interest. Without aiming to expound the contents of the novel, we shall merely quote Volgin's conversations with Nivelzin and Sokolovsky concerning the emancipation of the peasants. "Let the matter of peasant emancipation be handed over to the landowners' party. There's no great difference," Volgin says to Sokolovsky, and to the latter's remark that, on the contrary, the difference is immense, since the landowners' party is against giving the peasants land, he replies firmly: "No, not immense, but trivial. It would be immense, if the peasants received the land without redemption. There is a difference between taking something away from a person or letting him keep it, but it's all the same if you make him pay for it. The plan of the landowners' party differs from the plan of the Progressists only in that it is simpler, shorter. Therefore it is even better. Less delay, *probably, also less burden for the peasants.*"\* Those of the peasants who have money will purchase land. And there is no point in obliging those who do not have money to purchase land. *It will only ruin them.* Redemption is the same as purchase. To tell the truth, it would be better to free them without land.... The question is presented in such a way that I find no cause to get excited even at whether or not the peasants will be emancipated at all; all the less at who will emancipate them, the liberals or the landowners. To my mind, it does not matter. Or perhaps it would even be better if the landowners do this."\*\*\*

In a conversation with Nivelzin Volgin displays a different aspect of his attitude to the formulation of the peasant question at that time. "They say: free the peasants!" he exclaims. "Where are the forces for such an undertaking? There are no forces as yet. It is absurd to embark on an undertaking when there are no forces for it. And you can see how things are going: they will start to free them. What will happen—judge for yourself, what will happen when you set about something that you cannot do.... You will spoil it, and the result will be an abomination. Ah, our emancipator gentlemen, all your Ryazantsevs and company! Braggarts; chatterers; dolts!..."\*\*\*

These remarks by Volgin on the premature nature of peasant emancipation are, of course, erroneous. Serfdom was such a great evil, it hampered the development of all aspects of social life

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\* All the italics in this extract are ours.

\*\* *Prologue to a Prologue*, p. 199.

\*\*\* *Ibid.*, p. 110. It is actually clear, from the novel, that these remarks by Volgin belong to the period when Chernyshevsky's articles on redemption appeared. But in that case the publication of these articles would be inexplicable: who would defend projects which he himself considers totally unfeasible in the given circumstances? We think it more likely that when Chernyshevsky was writing his novel he ascribed his later views on the conditions of peasant emancipation to an earlier period, without noticing it.

in Russia at that time to such an extent, that its abolition could not be premature in any case and under any conditions. But for a proper understanding of Chernyshevsky's view on this matter one must remember that the events of that time may have appeared to him in quite a different perspective from that in which they appear to us today. He nourished, it would seem, some hope for peasant uprisings, and at the same time he evidently considered possible a very rapid growth of the extreme party which was entirely on the side of the peasantry.<sup>43</sup> Thus, emancipation may have seemed premature to him in the sense that because it calmed peasant unrest, the Gordian knot of the landowners' power could no longer be cut by the axe of the peasantry, and, on the other hand, the extreme democratic party did not yet possess the strength for serious pressure on the government. The acquisition by the party of sufficient strength for this may have seemed to him a matter of only a few years, and he may have considered a short-term postponement of emancipation useful in view of the importance of the results which such a postponement promised. There are some obvious hints in his articles to the fact that he considered the revolutionary movement in the Russia of that day perfectly possible, hints on which we shall later arrest the reader's attention, since they explain to a considerable extent the direction of his subsequent literary activity.

Our Narodniks now idealise the Russian peasantry terribly and discover in it with the most amazing ease all the qualities and aspirations which they would like to see in it. Therefore, not wishing for a moment to liken Chernyshevsky to them, we hasten to add that, in spite of his belief in the possibility of a peasant revolution, he was in fact far from a false idealisation of the people. The Russia of that day did not appear to him as particularly attractive. He occasionally went so far as to express a sharply negative attitude towards his fellow-countrymen. "A wretched nation, a wretched nation!" exclaims Volgin, under whose name, as we have said, Chernyshevsky portrayed himself, in *Prologue to a Prologue*, "a nation of slaves, nothing but slaves from top to bottom."<sup>44</sup> Even in his calmer moments the awareness of the terrible backwardness and downtrodden nature of the Russian peasantry did not leave him. In this respect he was the direct heir of Belinsky's views, who towards the end of his life used to say that arguing with the Slavophiles helped him "reject a mystical belief in the people."<sup>45</sup> To be more convincing, let us point

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\* P. 209.

\*\* Пыпин, «Белинский, его жизнь и переписка», Спб. 1876, т. II, стр. 324-325. [Pyпин, *Belinsky*,] *His Life and Correspondence*, St. Petersburg, 1876, Vol. II, pp. 324-25.]

to Chernyshevsky's excellent and instructive article "*Is This Not the Beginning of a Change?*" in the November issue of the *Sovremennik* for 1861. The article was written on the occasion of the publication of a volume of *Stories* by N. V. Uspensky. In it the author criticises "the invincible urge to embellish popular customs and concepts". According to him, the stories dealing with the life of the people by Turgenev and Grigorovich showed such an urge. He compares the attitude of these two writers to the people with Gogol's attitude to Akaky Akakiyevich.<sup>44</sup> Gogol does not mention his hero's defects, because he regards these defects as totally irremediable. "Akaky Akakiyevich was a silly idiot! But to tell the whole truth about Akaky Akakiyevich is pointless and shameless.... He can do nothing for himself, so let us incline others in his favour.... Let us keep silent about his defects." Grigorovich, Turgenev and all their imitators had precisely the same attitude to the people. All the people's defects "are concealed, varnished, glossed over, and the only point that is stressed is that the people is wretched, wretched".\* The chief merit of N. V. Uspensky, in the eyes of our author, was the total absence in him of such an attitude towards the people. Chernyshevsky remarks that N. V. Uspensky "represented the Russian common man as a duffer" who found it "hard to put together two separate thoughts in his head". But, to quote him, it could not be otherwise! Not only Russian, but also West-European peasants show a terrible lack of development. With regard to the quality of the "duffer", he "is ready to prove that the vast majority of people of all estates are duffers". Most people of all estates and all countries live by routine and display extreme slow-wittedness as soon as they leave their customary circle of ideas. In order to give us portrayals of the life of the people which are true to reality, literature should not ignore the negative aspects of the popular character. In N. V. Uspensky's stories—which, it must be said, frequently verged on caricature—Chernyshevsky saw "the beginning of a change" in the attitude of literature to the people, and in the author of these stories he hailed the appearance of a new section of educated Russians who were able to deal and talk with the peasants not as kind and condescending masters, but quite simply, as equals with equals. He expects a great deal from the appearance of this section.

The view of the peasantry as an estate of "duffers" would seem to exclude any hope of the possibility of a revolutionary movement in the Russian people. But Chernyshevsky by no means renounces this hope. He states categorically that the peasants are extremely undeveloped or, to put it simply, stupid. "But do not be in a hurry to draw conclusions from this regard-

\* See the above-mentioned issue, Russian Literature section, p. 83.

ing the validity or non-validity of your hopes, if you wish to alleviate the lot of the people," he says at the end of the article. "Take the commonest ... shallow person: no matter how drab and petty the life he leads, it has in it moments of a totally different shade, moments of energetic efforts, courageous decisions. The same is also encountered in the history of every nation."

It was on such a moment of courageous decisions that N. G. Chernyshevsky pinned his hopes. He thought that this moment was not far off, and almost all the best people of that time thought exactly the same. The secret revolutionary societies, which sprang up at the beginning of the sixties, were based on this conviction.<sup>46</sup> It was supported partly by the unrest of the emancipated peasants, who were stubbornly waiting for "real freedom", and partly by the state of affairs in the West. The events in Italy, the North American War,<sup>46</sup> the intense political ferment in Austria and Prussia—all this could give grounds for thinking that the reaction which had reigned since 1849 would eventually be conquered by the new liberation movement. And it was permissible to hope that the events in Europe would affect Russia also. Believing comes easily to him who wants to believe! Chernyshevsky and those who shared his views had not yet realised that the political movements of the West could serve as a useful stimulus for Russia's internal development on one essential condition only: namely, if Russia's domestic and, above all, economic relations bore even the slightest similarity to the relations in the West. Today the similarity exists and, one can say, it is increasing with each hour. But at the beginning of the sixties this was a long way off. Therefore the liberation movements of the West were more likely to strengthen Russian stagnation, than Russian progress at that time. At the beginning of the sixties Russia could still have tried again to assume the role of gendarme of Europe, so brilliantly performed by her in 1848-49.

## VII

If, for all his ardent love of the people, our author was able to take a sober view of its defects, one can imagine how he regarded the nobility and the liberal party, which was very strident at that time. Here he was quite merciless. We have already quoted Volgin's remark on the liberal Ryazantsev and company. There are many such remarks in the *Prologue to a Prologue*. In general Chernyshevsky never missed an opportunity of ridiculing the Russian liberals in his articles and stating in the press that neither he, nor the whole extreme party, had anything in common with them. Cowardice, lack of foresight, narrow-mindedness, inertia and loud-mouthed boastfulness—these are the distinguishing

features which he saw in the liberals of that time. Such a description is given by him almost word for word in the article "The Russian at a Rendezvous" printed in the *Athenaeum* in 1858. It was written in connection with Turgenev's story *Asya*, but since *Asya* appeared in the *Sovremennik* Chernyshevsky did not consider it proper to write about it in his journal. Very little, it would be better to say almost nothing, is said in the article about the story itself. The author merely draws attention to the scene in which the hero of the story makes his declaration of love to Asya, and, in connection with this scene, he indulges in "reflections". The reader will recall, of course, that at the critical moment Turgenev's hero turned coward and went back on his word. It is this circumstance that caused Chernyshevsky to "reflect". He notes that indecision and cowardice are the distinctive features not only of this hero, but of most of the heroes of our best literary works. He recalls Rudin, Beltov, and the tutor of Nekrasov's *Sasha*,<sup>47</sup> and sees the same features in all of them. He does not blame the authors of the novels on this account since they were only recording what is encountered at every turn in real life. There is no manliness in Russian people, therefore the characters in the novels have none either. And Russian people have no manliness because they are not in the habit of taking part in public affairs. "When we go into society, we see around us people in uniforms and civilian morning or evening dress; these people are five and a half or six feet tall, and sometimes even more; they grow or shave the hair on their cheeks, above their upper lip and on their chin; and we imagine we are looking at men. This is a total error, an optical illusion, an hallucination, nothing more. Without acquiring the habit of independent participation in civil affairs, without acquiring the feelings of a citizen, the male child grows up and becomes middle-aged, and then an elderly being of the masculine gender, but he does not become a man or, at any rate, not a man of a noble character." "Among developed, educated and *liberal* people, the absence of noble manliness strikes one still more than among ignorant people, because the developed, and liberal man likes to talk about important matters. He talks with enthusiasm and eloquence, but only until it becomes a matter of passing from words to deeds." "So long as there is no question of action, but merely the need to fill up empty hours, an empty mind, or an empty heart, with talks and dreams, the hero is very glib; but once it is a matter of expressing his feelings plainly and precisely, the majority of the heroes immediately begin to waver and feel tongue-tied. A few, the most courageous, somehow contrive to muster their forces and stammer something that provides a vague idea of their thoughts. But just attempt to take their wishes at face value and say to them: 'you want so-and-so; we're very glad; begin to do something



about it and you'll have our support'—if such a remark is made one half of the very brave heroes faints, the other begins to reproach you gruffly for putting them in an awkward position; they begin to say that they did not expect such proposals from you, that they are quite at a loss and cannot think properly because it is not possible to do so at a moment's notice and, moreover, that they are honest people, and not only honest but very mild, and they do not want to cause you any unpleasantness, and that, in general, it is not possible, really, to trouble oneself about all that is said merely from having nothing to do, and that it is best not to undertake anything at all, because everything involves trouble and inconvenience, and at present no good can come of it, because, as already said, they never for a moment expected, or anticipated, and so on and so forth."

We have never read such a vicious and at the same time so accurate a description of Russian liberalism. What would N. G. Chernyshevsky have said to the by no means few people here now who, while calling themselves revolutionaries, pin all their hopes on a liberal "society" and seek by hook or by crook to turn our revolutionary party into a party of respectable and moderate liberals? For Russian liberals have changed little since the time when the *Sovremennik* showered its sarcasm upon them.

To be fair, however, one must add that our author was not contemptuous of Russian liberals alone. In the excellent political reviews which he wrote for the *Sovremennik* right up to the end of his life at liberty, our author constantly displayed the most merciless contempt for all European liberals in general. In particular for the Austrian liberals (i.e., the liberal party of the Austrian Germans), the Prussian and the Italian liberals. In his articles on the history of France, as is well known, he did not express any great respect for the liberal party either. All this, of course, could not please the representatives of Russian liberalism, and in their struggle with him they made use of the device to which liberals of all countries often have recourse in their clashes with those who have advanced far beyond them in politics: they accused him of hating freedom and even of sympathising with despotism. Naturally, such accusations on the part of the liberals could only amuse Chernyshevsky. He feared them so little that he sometimes, as it were, provoked them to make new accusations, pretending that he acknowledged these as perfectly justified. "For us there is no better amusement than liberalism," he says in one of his last political reviews, "and we have an irresistible desire to look about for liberals in order to poke fun at them."\* And he proceeds to poke fun at the

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\* *Sovremennik*, 1862, March, Politics, p. 188.

Prussian liberals, who, as he most aptly remarked, were annoyed that political freedom in Prussia "does not institute itself".\*

But such "poking fun" did not prevent the attentive reader from realising that Chernyshevsky's contemptuous attitude towards liberalism was not caused by a lack of love for freedom. It was enough to read only a few of his political reviews to see how passionately he sympathised with all liberation movements, no matter where they started: in France or Italy, America or Hungary. He merely thought that the role of the liberals in such movements was usually a most unseemly one. They themselves do very little, and often even impede the efforts of others, attacking people who are bolder and more resolute than they. Then later, when, thanks to the efforts of these resolute people, the struggle is nearing an end and victory seems certain, the liberals try to elbow their way to the front and enjoy the chestnuts taken out of the fire by the hands of "fanatics". Who does not know that liberals have always behaved like this everywhere? Who does not know that these people are the same *exploiters* in politics as they are in the sphere of the economy, where they belong to the class of businessmen and entrepreneurs? It was for these exploitative inclinations that Chernyshevsky hated them. And this hatred of *exploiters* shows through on every page of his political reviews. We, for our part, regret not that Chernyshevsky expressed himself clearly and precisely on this count, but merely that after him none of our political reviewers has expressed himself with such clarity and precision. The political concepts of our progressive journalists have, in general, become dreadfully confused and shallow in the last twenty-five years. This is why there have been no fine political reviews such as Chernyshevsky wrote for the *Sovremennik* in any Russian journals. In these reviews his outstanding mind and his sober view of things are felt with particular force. In them he hardly ever deviates from the unquestionable thesis that "*the course of history is determined by the actual relations of forces*",\*\* and, proceeding from this, he makes an accurate analysis of the internal springs of political life in the civilised countries of his day. Only one criticism can be made on the subject of Chernyshevsky's reviews. He was, of course, sometimes, mistaken in this or that political forecast: thus, for example, he did not think that the Civil War in North America would go on for a long time, and wrote at the beginning of 1862 that

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\* *Sovremennik*, 1862, April, Politics, p. 357.

\*\* The reader will, perhaps, recall, that Lassalle in his Speech on the Essence of the Constitution ("Über Verfassungswesen") speaks in almost exactly the same words of the *relations of forces* as the essential basis of the political organisation of any given country.

one could regard this war as already over with the total victory of the North. But who does not make mistakes in forecasts of this kind? In general, however, he displayed great political insight and assessed the relationships of the different states and different political parties remarkably accurately. The only thing which he did not foresee and forecast was the outstanding political role which the working class in all the advanced countries was to take upon itself in the very near future (from the time of the founding of the International Working Men's Association in 1864). This *revolutionary in principle*, who maintained that in the internal affairs of every country, as between individual states, all important disputes are in the last analysis settled *by war*,\* did not yet see the extent to which all the revolutionary forces of modern civilised societies were joining together in the working class alone. He was still too inclined to pin exaggerated hopes on the "best people" from other classes of society. Here his customary insight was paralysed by the vagueness of his view of the proletariat as the "*common people*".

However, we note that in discussing our author's attitude to liberalism and liberals we have digressed considerably. This interesting subject has caused us to forget consecutiveness of exposition. Let us hasten to rectify our error.

First and foremost, again to be fair, let us say that the cowardice of the Russian liberals was the more striking merely because of their predilection for high-sounding talk. In fact the reactionary "landowners' party" did not show greater courage. Chernyshevsky had no direct relations with our "aristocrats". "He never belonged even to the lower ranks of the nobility, to say nothing of the higher, important one. But which town, large or small, did not ring with the glory of their great deeds? He knew from childhood that they were violent, arrogant people."\*\* In the age of the emancipation of the peasants everything that these people regarded as their most important interests was at stake. They protested and shouted loudly: "We will not allow it, we will not allow it!—we do not want it, and they will not dare!—Let them dare and they will see what it means to anger the Russian nobility!" But no sooner did the government raise its voice at them, than they put their tails between their legs—"fell silent, as if paralysed". Chernyshevsky, "as a democrat", found it amusing and pleasant to see such a change. He had no liking for the nobility, but there were moments when he felt no hostility towards it. How can one hate miserable slaves?\*\*\*

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\* *Souremennik*, 1862, April, Politics, p. 364.

\*\* Chernyshevsky speaks thus of Volgin in the *Prologue to a Prologue*.

\*\*\* *Prologue to a Prologue*, pp. 208, 209.

## VIII

Such was Chernyshevsky's attitude to the various estates and parties of the Russia of his day. And the more he became imbued with this negative attitude, the sharper was the tone of his articles, the more merciless his ridicule, and the more often he threw himself into polemics. In general he was very fond of polemicising. To quote his own words, even his friends had always noticed in him an extraordinary, "in their opinion even excessive love of elucidating controversial questions by means of impassioned polemics."\* Polemics always seemed to him a very convenient and, perhaps, even essential instrument for introducing new ideas into society. Nevertheless at the beginning of his literary activity he seems to have avoided polemics. The *Essays on the Gogol Period of Russian Literature* are written in a calm and conciliatory tone. Only in relation to Shevryyov, a well-known Moscow critic in Belinsky's day, does he exhibit a trenchant irony, and he also writes about Senkovsky (Baron Brambeus) with scornful pity, describing him as a man who wasted his tremendous powers on futile literary clowning. For the most part, however, he speaks of the other writers of the Gogol period with praise. Even in the literary activity of Pogodin, whom Belinsky's circle ridiculed so much and whom Shchedrin later called a ventriloquist archaeologist—even in Pogodin's activity he finds useful and praiseworthy features. He speaks of the Slavophiles with unfeigned respect. In spite of all their obvious delusions, he considers them to be true friends of "enlightenment" and warmly sympathises with their attitude towards the Russian land commune.\*\*

But from the time of the disputes on communal land tenure

\* *Works*, Vol. V, p. 472. In the *Essays on the Gogol Period* he defends Belinsky's predecessor, Nadezhdin, against the many reproaches for his passion for sharp polemics. "Why did Nadoumko (Nadezhdin's pseudonym) use such a sharp tone? Could he not have said the same thing in a milder form? They are quite remarkable—our literary concepts, and all other concepts for that matter! The question is constantly being asked as to why the farmer ploughs his field with a crude iron plough or ploughshare! How else can one plough up soil which is rich but heavy to till? Surely it is not hard to understand that no important question is decided without war, and war is conducted with fire and sword, not with diplomatic phrases, which are appropriate only when the aim of the struggle conducted by arms has been attained? It is unlawful to attack the unarmed and defenceless, the old and crippled, but the poets and men of letters against whom Nadezhdin was writing were not the like of these...." (*Sovremennik*, 1856, April, Criticism, pp. 41-42).

\*\* "The concept of the predominance of the *mir*, the commune, over the individual in old Russia is one of the most cherished convictions of the Slavophiles," he says in the third of these *Essays*. And this teaching on the relation of the individual to society constitutes, in his opinion, "the healthy part of their system and is, in general, worthy of all respect for its fairness" (see *Sovremennik*, 1856, February, Criticism, p. 80). On account of this teaching on the commune he sometimes defended the Slavophil *Russkaya Beseda*.

he was compelled to abandon this calm, genial tone and employ his polemical talent to the full. The acknowledged representatives of liberal economy had a bad time of it, particularly Vernadsky, the editor of the *Ekonomicheskyy Ukazatel*.<sup>49</sup> Chernyshevsky positively immortalised this "S. C." (State Counsellor) and "D. Hist. Sc., Pol. Ec. and Stat." (i.e., Doctor of Historical Science, Political Economy and Statistics, which is how Vernadsky, proud of his ranks and diplomas, signed himself). The devastated scholar not only fled from the battlefield, but, to crown the comedy, began to assure of his respect the self-same Chernyshevsky whom, at the beginning of the dispute, he had taken the liberty of treating like an impertinent ignoramus. It must be confessed that it would hardly be possible to defend any cause more skilfully than Chernyshevsky defended the commune. He said in its favour absolutely everything that could be said, and would, perhaps, have emerged victorious from the dispute, even if his opponents had been many times stronger than they were. If our "intelligentsia" adheres so firmly to the commune to this day, it is thanks to the ineradicable influence of Chernyshevsky.\*

We have already seen that our author very soon ceased to attach importance to the granting of land to the peasants. He began to regard this as a source of the future ruin of the peasant. In his *Unaddressed Letters* he says outright that peasants who have been freed with land are placed in a worse economic position than they were in as serfs dependent on the landowners. We could therefore refrain entirely from examining his arguments in favour of the commune. But since such great practical importance is attached to them in Russia to this day, we feel bound to give a brief assessment of them.—In his defence of Russian communal land tenure Chernyshevsky reveals the same defect which characterises all his economic writings. He is excessively *abstract*. He speaks essentially not about the Russian commune with its real position and the possible conditions of its further development, but about the commune *an sich*,\*\* which exists in theory and which satisfies only certain of the demands relating to the periodic re-allotment of the land. But neither the commune nor any other forms of popular life should be discussed in this way. In the article "A Criticism of the Philosophical Prejudices Against Communal Land Tenure" Chernyshevsky answers his opponents by referring to Hegel's famous doctrine that the third and final phase in the development of any given phenomenon is similar in form to the first. The peoples began with communal land tenure,

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from attacks by other periodicals (see *Chernyshevsky's Notes on Journals*, March, 1857, reprinted in the fifth volume of the foreign edition of his *Works*).

\* [See below the addendum to this passage for the German edition, p. 161 of this volume.]

\*\* [in itself]

and they will return to it again in their later development. It must be said that Chernyshevsky went much further here than Hegel. Hegel speaks of the formal similarity of the third phase of development to the first, but he did not speak of the full *identity* of these phases. Chernyshevsky, however, seems to assume a full identity. Following Hegel, one can assume that the peoples, having begun with *public* ownership, will return to it later, but one cannot say that the peoples will return to the same forms of communal land tenure with which they began their development. And if this can be expected, why stop at the village commune with re-allotments? It must be assumed in such a case that the peoples will return to primitive tribal institutions, for the village commune itself is a relic and subsequent modification of them. But it is unlikely that anyone would venture to make such an assumption today. In referring to Hegel, Chernyshevsky overlooked two most important features of Hegelian philosophy. Firstly, in Hegel all development—in logic, in nature, and in social relations—takes place out of itself, by the force of its inner, “immanent” dialectics. Chernyshevsky should have shown that the Russian commune possesses that inner logic of relations, which with time should lead it from communal land *tenure* to communal *cultivation* of the land and to communal *use* of its produce. For it was in the interests of such a form of public ownership that he defended communal land tenure; he thought that the commune would facilitate the transition to it. But Chernyshevsky did not do this, because, pinning his hopes in general mainly on the dissemination of knowledge, he paid little attention to *the inner logic of social relations, under the influence of which the development of mankind takes place*. Moreover, Chernyshevsky forgot the constant attention to reality which, to quote his own words, characterised Hegel. Let us recall how he expounded Hegel's views in the *Essays on the Gogol Period of Russian Literature*: “There is no abstract truth; truth is concrete, i.e., a definitive judgment can be pronounced only about a definite fact, after examining all the circumstances upon which it depends. ‘Is war disastrous or beneficial?’ This cannot be answered definitely in general; one must know what kind of war is meant, everything depends upon the circumstances of time and place.” The commune too should have been discussed in exactly the same way: is the land commune a good or bad thing? One cannot give a definite reply to this: one must know what kind of commune is meant; everything depends on the circumstances of time and place. But Chernyshevsky did not argue in this way. He indulged in abstractions and thus totally betrayed the spirit of the very philosophy which he quoted in his main polemical article.\*

\* Chernyshevsky appears to have been against the collective responsibility. We assume this for the following reason. In a bibliographical note on

Rightly regarding private ownership as merely an intermediate form in the development of economic relations, Chernyshevsky strongly emphasised the fact that, in Hegel's opinion, intermediate phases of development could, in certain circumstances, be considerably reduced or even not take place at all. This in particular was subsequently pounced upon by the Narodniks, all of whose programmes were based on the assumption that capitalism—that intermediate phase in the development of mankind—would not take place in Russia. Abstractly speaking, such reductions of intermediate phases are perfectly possible. But it is a long way from the possibility of a phenomenon to its reality. For this or that theoretically possible phenomenon to be realised in real life, certain concrete conditions are necessary, in other words, an adequate cause is necessary. At the time when Chernyshevsky was defending Russian communal land tenure, he could regard as a cause sufficient for the removal of the "ulcer of proletarianisation" the good will of the Russian government, who, it

Gan's brochure «О настоящем быте мещан Саратовской губернии» [*On the Present Way of Life of the Petty Bourgeoisie in the Saratov Gubernia*] he quotes without any reservations the opinion of the author whom he was analysing that the collective responsibility is detrimental to the well-being of tax-payers. "Those who pay punctually have more imposed upon them," says Gan. Chernyshevsky appears to be in complete agreement with him (see *Sovremennik*, 1861, January, Russian Literature, p. 64). Leaving aside the petty bourgeoisie, we would ask how the modern state could ensure punctual payment of taxes by commune peasants without the collective responsibility. If peasant holdings are the property of the commune and therefore not alienable in the event of the inability of individual householders to pay taxes, the whole commune must answer for the inability of these tax-payers to pay taxes. In this case the collective responsibility is not only natural, but simply essential. On the other hand, if land holdings are the property of individual homesteads, the collective responsibility loses all foundation, but then one must allow the alienability of the holdings in the event of the householders' being unable to pay taxes. True, the theory admits of yet a third solution: abstractly speaking, one could abolish the collective responsibility, but at the same time recognise the land as belonging to the commune and totally inalienable. But how could this be done in practice? How would the state deal with insolvent tax-payers? Sell their chattels? But the sale of chattels could easily make it totally impossible, and already often does, for the peasant to cultivate the land which has been allotted to him. Or, perhaps, the livestock and all domestic implements should also be recognised as inalienable? But will the average Russian peasant have much left that is liable for sale as chattels, if we exclude livestock and implements? Experience shows that in such cases all that remains to the peasant is one chattel: his own body, which is subjected to torture for the arrears. But the torture of insolvent tax-payers cannot be regarded as a satisfactory solution of the question, which must be solved because the state, of course, will not agree to deprive itself of all guarantees of punctual payment of taxes. We would remind the reader, however, that at the time when Chernyshevsky still thought it necessary to defend the commune, he was hoping that the peasants would be placed in a fairly favourable economic position, in which the question of taxes would not be as urgent as it has become today.

seemed, would not have found it difficult to understand that its own advantage depended on the well-being of the peasantry. But the government did not understand this, and therefore there was not sufficient cause in Russia for the removal of the "ulcer of proletarianisation" and the related phase of economic development. Chernyshevsky himself, as we know, very soon realised how natural this lack of understanding on the part of the government was. He thought it pointless to defend not only communal land tenure, but also the very principle of giving land to the emancipated peasants. To quote his own strong, mercilessly acute expression, he had "become stupid in my own eyes" and was "ashamed to remember the untimely self-assurance" with which he defended communal land tenure. But the modern Narodniks feel no shame for that of which Chernyshevsky was ashamed. They still persist in talking about the age-long foundations of popular life and reduction in phases of development—a reduction for which they do not indicate any cause, apart from their own "ideals". This cause cannot be recognised as sufficient in any case whatsoever. But we can find sufficient cause for the stubbornness of our Narodniks without difficulty. It lies, among other things, in the weakness of minor pupils for the errors of their great teachers, about which we have already spoken above. Incidentally, we shall see later that Chernyshevsky himself did not view the Russian commune in the same way as the modern Narodniks.\*

After commencing with communal land tenure, Chernyshevsky's dispute with our liberal economists rapidly assumed a broader theoretical nature and turned to general questions of economic policy. True to the dogmas of the vulgar economy under the influence of which all their views had been formed, our Manchester men<sup>60</sup> hastened to put their main, scientific stronghold on the stage: *the principle of state non-interference*. They knew that the whole teaching of Bastiat and his followers was based on this

\* With regard to the reduction of certain phases of development, Chernyshevsky understood perfectly that a given phase when reduced does not always lead to the same results to which it leads when it lasts for a long time. In "Polemical Gems" (*Works*, Vol. I, p. 373) he talks about cigars which acquire particularly valuable properties for smokers, when they undergo the process of slow drying and the chemical changes associated with it. But try to reduce the length of this drying process and dry raw cigars straightaway artificially. To quote our author, such cigars will not be very good. What does this mean? It means that a different course of a process leads to different chemical results. And is it not the same in social life? Are there no grounds for thinking that the more or less prolonged process of capitalist development creates political, intellectual and moral qualities in the working class, which we will not find at all in a people that has not abandoned the antediluvian "foundations" of its life at any point in its history? Should one not fear that such a people will reject not only the intermediate but all other "phases of development" and will start to put forward for positions of authority people who recommend it to go straight over to the final phase of social development? What do the Narodniks think?



principle, and naively assumed that there was no one on earth greater than Bastiat. Naturally, the matter took such a turn that the dispute on non-interference of the state in the economic life of the people merely served as an occasion for a new victory for Chernyshevsky. Well acquainted with economic and socialist literature, he devastated all Bastiat's subtleties completely, without the slightest effort, joking and making fun of them. His article "*Economic Activity and Legislation*" may be regarded as one of the most skilful refutations of the theory of "laissez faire, laissez passer" not only in Russian economic literature, where Chernyshevsky occupies pride of place to this day, but in European socialist literature in general. In it our author employs all his dialectical power and polemical skill. He seems to be amusing himself with this fight, in which he parries the blows of his opponents with such ease. He plays with them, like a cat with a mouse; he makes all manner of concessions to them, expresses his willingness to agree to any of their tenets, to accept any interpretation of any given proposition—and then, after appearing to have given them every chance of victory and placed them in the most favourable conditions for their triumph, only then does he go over to the offensive and reduce them to absurdity with three or four syllogisms. Then new concessions begin, new, even more favourable interpretations of one and the same tenet and—new proof of its absurdity. And at the end of the article Chernyshevsky, as was his wont, points out a moral to his opponents and makes them feel how little they know not only about the strict methods of scientific thinking, but also about the basic requirements of ordinary common sense. It is interesting that the principle of state non-interference, which had such ardent supporters in Russia in the late fifties and early sixties, was soon abandoned almost completely by Russian economists. To a large extent this is explained by the general state of our industry and trade and by the consequent influence on our theoreticians of the German school of Katheder socialism.<sup>51</sup> But in this case the fact that the principle in question, from the very beginning of its dissemination in Russian literature, encountered such a powerful opponent as N. G. Chernyshevsky is undoubtedly of great significance. Having been taught a lesson, the Russian Manchester men thought it prudent to fall silent, fade into the background, and retire.

## IX

It was not on economic problems alone that Chernyshevsky had to wage a fierce polemic. Neither were his opponents only liberal economists. As the influence of the *Souremennik* circle in Russian literature grew, the greater were the number of attacks launched

from the most varied quarters both on that circle in general and on our author in particular. The contributors to the *Sovremennik* were regarded as dangerous people who were prepared to destroy all the notorious "foundations". Some of "Belinsky's friends", who at first considered it possible to go along with Chernyshevsky and those holding his views (among whom N. A. Dobrolyubov held pride of place), repudiated the *Sovremennik* as an organ of the "nihilists", and began to declare that Belinsky would never have approved of its trend. Such was I. S. Turgenev's attitude.\* Even the radical Herzen himself began to grumble in his *Kolokol* at the "jaundiced" and the "whistlers" who negate for the sake of negating, mock for the sake of mocking and whom it seems to be impossible to please with anything whatsoever. The reader knows, of course, that "whistlers" or "knights of bedlam" were the names given to contributors to the *Sovremennik* after the *Svistok* began to appear in the form of a special supplement to it, which mercilessly ridiculed all literary and social manifestations of petty tyranny, verbiage, obscurantism and pedantry.<sup>52</sup> Incidentally, most of the articles in the *Svistok* do not belong to the pen of Chernyshevsky. Only rarely did he contribute to it, as he was literally overwhelmed with other work. In the closing years of his literary activity he not only contributed regularly to every issue of the *Sovremennik*, but every issue almost always contained several articles by him. Usually his articles were distributed among the various sections of the journal as follows: firstly, he contributed a long article on some general theoretical problem, then he wrote a political survey, made a review of Russian, and sometimes also foreign literature, reviewed several new books, and, lastly, by way of relaxation and diversion, as it were, he readily made polemical sorties against his opponents. The *Sovremennik* for 1861 is particularly rich in polemical articles written by Chernyshevsky. It was at this time that he wrote his well-known "Polemical Gems", "National Tactlessness" (attacking the Lvov *Slovo*), "Popular Muddleheadedness" (attacking Aksakov's *Dyen*<sup>53</sup>) and many polemical notes in the Russian and Foreign Literature section. It is necessary to dwell at length on certain of these polemical articles.

We shall not say a great deal about "Polemical Gems". These articles constitute a reply to the attacks of the *Russky Vestnik* and *Otechestvenniye Zapiski*. For the historian of our literature, of course, it would be very interesting to recall the arguments

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\* Chernyshevsky relates that Turgenev could still tolerate him to some extent, but had no patience at all with Dobrolyubov. "You're just a snake but Dobrolyubov is a cobra," he said to Chernyshevsky (see the letter already quoted: "By Way of an Expression of Gratitude").

used by the enemies of the *Sovremennik*; for a description of Chernyshevsky, however, there is no need to relate in detail what strange and often completely senseless accusations were made against him by Katkov, Albertini or Dudyshkin.<sup>54</sup> But in the article attacking the *Russky Vestnik*, our author expresses, among other things, an extremely interesting view on his own literary activity. We shall quote it here. Chernyshevsky was very well aware that he held a prominent place in Russian literature. His opponents dreaded him and occasionally even paid him compliments. But his growing renown did not make him happy in the least. He had too low an opinion of Russian literature to consider the prominent place he occupied in it to be honourable. He was "completely cold to his literary reputation". The only thing he was interested in was whether he would be able to preserve the freshness of his thought and feeling till those better days when our literature would become really useful to society. "I know that better times will come for literary activity, when it will be of real benefit to society, and when he who possesses talent will really earn a good name. And so I am wondering whether when the time comes I shall still be able to serve society properly. Fresh strength and fresh convictions are needed for this. But I see that I am beginning to join the company of 'respected' writers, that is to say, of those writers who have been wrung dry, who lag behind the movement of social requirements. This rouses a feeling of bitterness. But what is there to be done? Age takes its toll. Youth does not come twice. I cannot help envying those who are younger and fresher than I." To encounter these noble fears is strange now for us, who know that when Chernyshevsky expressed them he had no more than a year of freedom left. The lines quoted were printed in the July issue of the *Sovremennik* for 1861, and in July of the following year he was already in the Fortress of SS Peter and Paul.... But one can imagine what contempt for his enemies was felt by this man, who in the full realisation of his vast superiority to them nevertheless attached no worth even to his own literary merits. And indeed almost every page of "Polemical Gems" radiates a cold contempt for the reprimanders of the *Sovremennik*. It is particularly noticeable in the reply to *Otechestvenniye Zapiski*. Chernyshevsky is not at all angry with his opponents from *Otechestvenniye Zapiski*. He admonishes them almost affectionately, as a good teacher admonishes a schoolboy who has misbehaved. Of course, a good teacher, reproving his charge, sometimes tells him very bitter truths and does not conceal his intellectual superiority to him. But he does so solely in the interests of the pupil. Chernyshevsky also acts thus. He does not forget a single error, a single slip of *Otechestvenniye Zapiski* and admonishes the editors paternally for their blunders. He is most vexed with them for the imprudent fervour with which they rushed into battle

with him. You are not competent to polemicise with me, he repeats to them, having shown the complete invalidity of this or that charge which they have levelled against him. When the opportunity arises, he tells them bluntly that he knows far more and understands things far better than they, that they are simply not in a position to judge the new ideas which he champions in literature. "You wish to know how extensive my knowledge is?" he addresses himself to Dudyshkin, who accused him of insolent ignorance on the evidence of other journals. "To that I can give you but one reply: incomparably more extensive than yours. And you know it yourself. So why did you try to get the answer in print? It was unwise, most unwise to put yourself in such a position. And please do not take this as pride: there is not much to be proud of in knowing more than you! And again do not take this as meaning that I want to say you have too little knowledge. No, this is not so: you do know something, and in general you are an educated person. Only why do you polemicise so badly?" etc. All this would, perhaps, be too caustic, if it were not undoubtedly true.

Nor does Chernyshevsky now spare the Slavophiles, of whom he formerly spoke with respect. Now they no longer seem to him the true friends of enlightenment. The tendencies of the Slavophiles had become so clear by the beginning of the sixties that it would be better to call them obscurantists. Of course, they continued to defend the commune and support peasant ownership of the land. But Chernyshevsky now no longer attached any importance to that. And apart from the defence of the afore-mentioned principles, the Slavophil literature of the day contained only absurd attacks on the decaying and cunning West and cloying eulogies of orthodoxy, autocracy and other similar delights of Russian life. So Chernyshevsky decided to teach them a lesson. The reason for this was the appearance of I. Aksakov's newspaper *Dyen*, the first few issues of which contained attacks on the *Sovremennik*. Chernyshevsky replied in the article "*Popular Muddle-headedness*". He explains the rudeness of the title by the fact that, having acquainted himself with Slavophil arguments, he decided to avoid the use of foreign words which, without changing the title of the article in essence, might have given it a more polite form.

Chernyshevsky was always a most ardent Westerner. And if his sympathy for communal land tenure brought him closer to the Slavophiles for a while and to a certain extent, he nevertheless always realised perfectly the absurdity of their talk about the decay of the West and the revival of mankind through Byzantine legends. Already in the *Essays on the Gogol Period* he expressed himself on this subject mildly, but most decisively. He believed that the reason for the opinions of Slavophil writers on the decay

of the West and the bankruptcy of its philosophy lay in the fact that even the best of them were not familiar with the true state of affairs in Western Europe and with the trend of advanced West-European thought. For Chernyshevsky the West was not a decrepit old man; on the contrary, it was a youth, a hale and hearty youth, "who (through the mouths of its advanced thinkers) says: I know a little, but I still have a great deal to learn, I still burn with the desire for more knowledge and am learning quite well.... I must still work hard in order to ensure myself a stable, comfortable existence; but I am willing to work, I have the strength, so, please, do not despair of my future."\* On the question of the future of Western Europe Chernyshevsky disagreed strongly not only with the Slavophiles, which is self-evident, but even with Herzen, who had been influenced by his relations with the Moscow Slavophile circle of the forties<sup>55</sup> and who frequently expressed the fear that the West, having progressed as far as socialism in its thought, would not have the strength to carry out its programme, just as Ancient Rome allegedly did not have the strength to carry out the demands of Christianity. Needless to say, in view of this assumed inability of the West, Russia was represented as the promised land of socialism, called upon to revive decrepit mankind. In all probability, Chernyshevsky's article, already cited by us, "*On the Causes of the Fall of Rome*", was aimed directly against this view of Herzen's. In it the author states bluntly that it is not worth arguing with such "cranks" as the Slavophiles about the destiny of the West and that he is taking up his pen with other people in mind, who possess common sense. It is to these people with sense that he argues that Western Europe cannot possibly have exhausted its strength, since its history up to the most modern times has been determined by the activity of one estate only: the aristocracy. Even the middle estate did not become dominant on the European continent until very recent times. And behind the middle estate stands the lower class, which has still had no direct influence on the destiny of Europe. On what grounds do people think, asks Chernyshevsky, that this new estate, in its turn, after entering the historical arena, will not be able to solve the social tasks which the higher estates could not solve? There are absolutely no grounds for thinking so, and, consequently, no grounds for fearing for the destiny of the West. To fear a new invasion of barbarians is simply ridiculous in view of the immense superiority of the forces of the civilised world. Finally, with regard to Russia and her alleged calling to revive mankind, Chernyshevsky mercilessly exposes the invalidity of such patriotic self-delusion. He sees communal land tenure as the

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\* *Sovremennik*, 1856, February, Criticism, pp. 73-74.

only feature of our social life worthy of sympathy. Yet communal land tenure also finds no mercy from his criticism. In Chernyshevsky's opinion, the commune could contribute its share of benefit to the subsequent development of Russia; yet we must not take pride in it, because it is a sign of our economic backwardness. Fond of illustrating his ideas with examples, Chernyshevsky cites an example here too to explain his view on the Russian commune. European engineers, he says, now use applied mechanics to construct suspension bridges. But it appears that in a backward Asiatic country—he does not quite remember which one—local engineers have long since been building suspension bridges on suitable sites. Does that mean that applied mechanics in Asia may be placed on a footing with that in Europe? There are bridges and bridges, and the Asian engineers' suspension bridge is infinitely inferior to its European counterpart. To be sure, when European engineers arrive in the Asiatic country which has long been familiar with suspension bridges, they will find it all the easier to convince a mandarin that the suspension bridge of today is not a godless invention. But that is all. Despite its suspension bridges, the Asiatic country will remain a backward country all the same while Europe will still be its preceptor. The same holds true for the Russian commune. Perhaps the latter will promote the development of our country; but the chief stimulus will come nonetheless from the West, and it does not really befit us to renovate the world, even by means of the commune.

However, the Slavophil "cranks" not only went on about the renovation of Europe by the Russo-Byzantine spirit, but also advanced a practical programme for this renovation. In the opinion of I. Aksakov's *Dyen*, Russia should have started by bringing the Slavs "the gifts of an independent existence under the protection of the wings of the Russian eagle".<sup>66</sup> Chernyshevsky argues that such ideas are no more than the product of "popular muddleheadedness". Firstly, he thinks that the mighty Russian eagle has many domestic Russian affairs of its own, which it should not forget for the sake of any renovations. "If you want war," he says, "ask yourselves whether our circumstances permit us to think of war." Secondly, he believes that our military interference would set all the Western powers against the liberation of the Slavs: "For there are only two million Turks in Europe, but seven or eight million Slavs. Surely they could cope with the Turks, couldn't they?... All they need is the certainty that the other powers will not prevent their liberation." If the Slavophiles really meant well to the Turkish Slavs, they would try to convince the Western powers that the collapse of Turkish power in Europe would not result in the annexation of the Danube principalities by Russia and would not lead to the turning of Constantinople into a Russian provincial town. If the Slavophiles did so, the

Turkish Slavs would be liberated even without our help. The same applies to the Austrian Slavs. "Would the Germans really want to support Austria, were they not afraid that if this Empire falls its eastern half will come under the rule of Russia?" You are setting the Germans against the liberation of the Austrian Slavs, Chernyshevsky says to the editors of the *Dyen* and adds that their military fervour is caused not by sympathy for the Slavs, but by the desire to subject the Slavonic tribes to Russian rule.

In passing Chernyshevsky also refutes the Slavophiles' lofty arguments about the perfidious and malicious attitude of the West to Russia. Pardon me, he says, but did not all the serious organs of the European press show great sympathy for the most important reforms in Russia? And does sympathising with the achievements of Russian social life mean wishing Russia ill?

The following year Chernyshevsky attacked the Slavophiles even more bitterly. The great minds of Slavophilism conceived the strange idea of addressing a series of the most naive homilies to the Serbs. These homilies are contained in the brochure *To the Serbs. A Message from Moscow*, which was signed by all the eminent representatives of the Slavophil party. Some of the ideas contained in this brochure are simply ridiculous, others not only ridiculous, but also reactionary in the extreme. Thus, for example, the Slavophiles advised the Serbs not to give political rights to people who were not of the Orthodox faith. Chernyshevsky replied to this *Message* with the biting article "*Self-styled Elders*".

Contiguous to the disputes on the attitude of Russia to the Slavs in general was the dispute on the mutual relations of certain Slavonic tribes. We know that the Slavophiles approved greatly of the struggle of the Galician Ruthenians<sup>57</sup> against the Poles. Chernyshevsky was always sympathetically inclined towards the Little Russians. He considered Belinsky's negative attitude to the emerging Little Russian literature to be a great mistake. In the January issue of the *Sovremennik* for 1861 he published a very sympathetic article on the occasion of the appearance of *Osno-va*,<sup>58</sup> the organ of the Little Russians. But his attitude towards the struggle of the Galician Ruthenians against the Poles could not be one of unconditional approval. First of all, he did not like the fact that the Ruthenians sought the support of the Viennese government. Nor did he like the influential role of the clergy in the movement of the Galician Ruthenians. "Lay affairs," he wrote, "should be the concern of laymen." Finally, Chernyshevsky did not like the exclusively *national* formulation of this question, which he regarded as primarily an *economic* one. In an article entitled "*National Tactlessness*" (*Sovremennik*, 1861, July) attacking the Lvov *Slovo*, Chernyshevsky sharply criticised the excessive nationalism of that organ. "It is very possible that a careful

examination of existing relations," he wrote, "would show the Lvov *Slovo* that at the basis of the matter there is a question that is far removed from the racial question—the question of estates. It is very possible that it would see Ruthenians and Poles on each of the two sides—people differing in race, but of the same social position. We do not believe that the Polish peasant should be hostile to the alleviation of the obligations and, in general, of the living conditions of the Ruthenian settlers. We do not believe that the sentiments of the Ruthenian landowners should differ very much in this matter from the sentiments of the Polish landowners. If we are not mistaken, the root of the Galician question lies not in relations of race, but of estate."

The mutual hostility of the peoples composing Austria was bound to appear even more tactless to Chernyshevsky since the Viennese government then, as previously, derived great advantages from it. "When one reflects carefully, one is not surprised at the many years of existence of the Austrian Empire," he wrote in a political review in the same issue of the *Sovremennik* that published the article "National Tactlessness"; "and why should it not maintain itself when there is such excellent political tact on the part of the nationalities embraced within its borders." To Chernyshevsky the Austrian Germans, Czechs, Croats and, as we have seen, Ruthenians seemed equally "slow-witted". He was afraid that the Slav "slow-wittedness" which was particularly evident in 1848-49 would again go very far. At the beginning of the sixties Hungary was waging a stubborn struggle against the Viennese reactionary centralists. The discontent of the Hungarians was running so high that at one time it could have been expected that there would be a revolutionary outburst in their country. In his political reviews, our author repeatedly expressed the fear that, in the event of a revolutionary movement in Hungary, the Austrian Slavs would again become obedient tools of reaction. The tactics of many Slav tribes in Austria at that time could only strengthen such fears, since the Austrian Slavs ventured to boast of the disgraceful role they had played in the 1848-49 events. Chernyshevsky strongly condemned these tactics and showed that it would have been more to their advantage if, on the contrary, they had supported the enemies of the Viennese government, enemies from whom they could have obtained substantial concessions. He said this concerning the attitude of the Croats to the Hungarians, and repeated it to the Ruthenians. "The estate party, hostile to the Ruthenians," we read in his article "National Tactlessness", "is now ready for concessions.... It would do no harm for the Lvov *Slovo* to give this some thought; perhaps the concessions which people who seem to it to be enemies are sincerely prepared to make, perhaps these concessions are so great that they would satisfy the Ruthenian settlers fully; in any event these concessions



are without doubt far greater and far more important than the concessions the Ruthenian settlers can get from the Austrians."

Finally, at the time when Chernyshevsky was polemicising against the *Slovo*, a strong political movement which he regarded with great sympathy was also taking place in Russian Poland. And for this reason alone the attacks of the Russian subjects of the house of Hapsburg against the Poles could not seem tactful and opportune to him.

Branches of the revolutionary Polish organisation existed in St. Petersburg as well, where Chernyshevsky lived almost continuously. Did he have any definite formal relations with the Polish revolutionaries? We do not yet possess any indication of this. It is highly likely that Polish historians of that period would be able to assist in clarifying this question. Nothing can be expected from Russian literature for most understandable reasons. With time *Russkaya Starina* will probably tell us something, but this will not be soon. Not wishing to indulge in conjectures, we shall limit ourselves, in clarifying Chernyshevsky's general sympathies towards the Polish cause, to information obtainable from his writings. But there is also little of that.

We could refrain entirely from touching upon the novel *Prologue to a Prologue* here. It portrays the friendly attitude of Volgin (Chernyshevsky) to Sokolovsky (Sierakowski). Volgin likes Sokolovsky's utter devotion to his convictions, his lack of conceited pettiness, his self-control, combined with the passionate zeal of the true agitator. Volgin calls him a *real man* and thinks that our liberals could learn a great deal from him. All this is very interesting, but it in no way explains Chernyshevsky's practical attitude to the Polish affair, about which there is not a word in the novel. From the articles of our author printed in the censored *Sovremennik* all that can be seen is that given the opportunity he always expressed himself in defence of Poland. He even defends from the attacks of official Russian writers the old Polish state system for which, with his democratic views, he could have felt little sympathy. But he praises in it aspects of social relations, to which he did not attach any value in his earlier articles. As we already know, in the article "Party Struggles in France" he displays a total indifference to political forms. When writing this article (in 1858) he believed that the democrat could not be reconciled *with the aristocracy alone* and that, in spite of the political freedom of England, the democrat should prefer Siberia where the "common people", he thought, live better than in England. Now Chernyshevsky regards questions of political organisation quite differently. Poland's old way of life attracts him by its political freedom. "Behind the Polish absence of bureaucratic centralisation," he says, reviewing part two of *The Archives of South-West Russia* which had just appeared then,

"lies the urge to establish a social order different from that which other powers had reached" (this is a reference to the Muscovite state, of course), "an order based, not on the sacrificing of the individual to the abstract idea of the state, embodied in the desire for power, but on the agreement of free individuals for their mutual welfare.... Here the social cause is the result of social thought; here the perpetual struggle of concepts and convictions moves from the sphere of thought and word straight to the manifestations of life." Let us assume that Polish society was completely aristocratic, "but the privileged circle could extend further and further and embrace the neglected, outcast mass of the people deprived of all rights, if civic concepts became broader and grew into general human ideas not restricted by temporary prejudices which limit their fullness".\* Even Polish democrats did not always show such passion in the defence of the old way of life in Poland. For the whole question was basically how the members of the Upper House of the Polish Diet could be made to recognise "universal human ideas".

On the question of the historical results of joining the Grand Duchy of Lithuania with Poland, Chernyshevsky also disagreed most strongly with our official historians. "Was the state of old Russia in the time of the Olgierds, Lubartas, Skyrigailos and Svidrigailos really better than under the Sigismunds in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries," he exclaims in reply to historians who argued that the joining with Poland was the sole cause of everything wrong in Western Russia. "It is time we stopped being one-sided and unjust to Poland," he continues, "let us recognise at least the beneficial nature of its influence on old Russia, if only in relation to enlightenment. Let us take the level of intellectual education in those parts of the Russian world which were joined with Poland and compare it with what existed in this respect in the part of our Russian fatherland which remained independent—in the form of the Muscovite state. Was it not from Little Russia that enlightenment came to the Moscow of the seventeenth century, and did not this enlightenment prepare all our subsequent education? And was it not under the influence of Poland that it grew in Little Russia?"

In Chernyshevsky's opinion, the Poles were not to blame either for the Polonising of Western Russia. The upper class in Western Russia had both the rights and the means to defend its faith and its language and to save its people from humiliation, whom, incidentally, it had itself enslaved. If, in spite of this, the Western Russian aristocracy had become completely Polonised, it had only itself to blame. "You could not preserve yourselves—don't put the blame on others," our author remarks.<sup>59</sup>

\* *Sour.*, 1861, April, New Books, p. 443 et seq.

## X\*

The revolutionary mood of Polish society coincided with the intense excitement of the extreme party in Russia. The students were in a state of ferment, secret societies sprang up which printed revolutionary programmes and proclamations, and an uprising of the peasantry dissatisfied with "the false freedom" was expected. We have seen that Chernyshevsky himself believed in the possibility of such an uprising; on the question of his attitude to the secret societies in Russia at that time we, unfortunately, know as little as of his attitude to the Polish organisations. Here we can also speak only of Chernyshevsky's mood, which is expressed in allusions and hints in his articles published in the *Sovremennik*. This mood was undoubtedly becoming more and more revolutionary. Chernyshevsky, who had at one time found it possible and useful to explain to the government its own interests in the matter of freeing the peasants, no longer even thinks of addressing himself to the government. To bargain with it at all, to count on it at all, rightly seems to him to be harmful self-delusion. In the article "*The Russian Reformer*", written on the occasion of the appearance of Baron M. Korf's book *The Life of Count Speransky*, Chernyshevsky demonstrates conclusively that no reformer in our country can depend on the government as regards important social reforms. Revolutionaries can depend on it even less. Enemies called Speransky a revolutionary, but such an evaluation appears laughable to Chernyshevsky. Speransky indeed had very extensive reform plans, but "it is ludicrous to call him a revolutionary judging by the extent of the means he proposed using to carry out his intentions". He could maintain his post only because he had managed to earn the trust of the Emperor Alexander. With this trust to support him, he intended to carry out his reforms. Precisely for this reason, Chernyshevsky considered him to be a dangerous dreamer. Dreamers are often simply ridiculous and their delusions trivial, but they "can be dangerous to society when their delusions concern important matters. In their rapturous bustle on the wrong track, they appear to achieve a measure of success, thus confusing many who, as a result of this illusory success, take it into their heads to follow them. From this standpoint, Speransky's activity may be called dangerous."\*\*

Hinting to the young the need for a revolutionary mode of action, Chernyshevsky at the same time explained to them that for the sake of attaining his aims the revolutionary is often com-

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\* [See below the version of the beginning of this chapter written for the German edition, p. 183 of this volume.]

\*\* *Sovremennik*, 1861, October, Russian Literature, pp. 249-50.

pelled to put himself in positions which an honest person pursuing purely personal ends can never permit himself to adopt. Thus, as far back as January 1861, in analysing a book by the American economist, Carey, he unexpectedly turns to a discussion of the famous Jewish heroine, Judith, and vehemently justifies her action. "The path of history is not paved like Nevsky Prospekt," our author remarks, "it runs across fields, either dusty or muddy, and cuts across swamps or forest thickets. He who fears being covered with dust or muddying his boots, had better not engage in social activity, for this is a noble occupation when one is really concerned with the good of the people, but it is not exactly a tidy one. It is true, however, that moral purity may be understood differently; some, for example, may feel that Judith did not tarnish herself.... Broaden your considerations and on many individual questions you will have obligations that are different from those resulting from an isolated examination of the same questions."

In relation to the Russian government Chernyshevsky's tone is growing more and more challenging. At the beginning of the sixties the government decided to lift the censorship regulations to some extent. It was resolved to draw up new censorship rules, and the press was allowed to express itself on the question of its own repression. Chernyshevsky lost no time in stating his view on the matter, a view which differed strongly from the usual liberal view. True, Chernyshevsky himself maliciously ridicules people who suppose that the printing press has some specific power like belladonna, sulphuric acid, fulminate of silver, etc. "Our personal opinion is not inclined towards expecting unnaturally harmful results from objects and actions which do not possess the power to produce such calamities. We think the printing press is too weak to produce social misfortune. After all, it does not contain so much ink that the latter could come pouring out somehow and flood the country; nor has it springs that, after jumping out somehow and thumping the type, could fire it as a case shot." However, Chernyshevsky admits that there are epochs when the press can be no less dangerous than case shot to the government of a country. These are the epochs when a government's interests *differ from the interests of society* and a revolutionary upheaval is imminent. A government in such a position has every ground for restricting the press, because the press, together with other social forces, is preparing its downfall. Almost all the successive French governments of this century have been continuously in this situation. All this is very painstakingly and calmly expounded by Chernyshevsky. Nothing is said in the article until the very end, about the Russian government. But in conclusion Chernyshevsky suddenly asks his reader—"Suppose it should turn out that the press laws are really necessary in our country? Then we should again deserve to be called obscurantists."

enemies of progress, haters of freedom, panegyrists of despotism, etc., just as we have already many times laid ourselves open to such censure." He therefore does not want to investigate the question of whether or not there is a need for special press laws in our country. "We fear," he says, "that a conscientious investigation would lead us to reply: yes, they are necessary."\* The conclusion is clear: they are necessary because Russia has entered the revolutionary period of her development.

In the same March issue of the *Sovremennik* that printed the article we have just quoted, there appeared a polemical article entitled "*Have We Learned the Lesson?*", concerning the well-known student demonstrations of 1861.<sup>60</sup> In it Chernyshevsky defends the students, who were reproached by our "protectors" for allegedly not wanting to study; and, incidentally, he also tells the government many home truths. The immediate cause for this polemic was an anonymous article in the *St. Petersburg Academic Bulletin* entitled "*To Study or Not To Study?*" Chernyshevsky replies that in regard to students this question has no sense, since they have always wanted to study, but the restricting university regulations prevented them. The university regulations would have treated students—people of an age when by our laws a man may marry, be taken into the civil service, or "command an army unit"—like children. It is not surprising that they protested. They were even barred from having such completely harmless organisations as mutual aid societies, which were undoubtedly essential in view of the material insecurity of the majority of the students. Students could not but revolt against such regulations, because it was a question of "a crust of bread and the possibility of attending lectures. This bread, this possibility were being withdrawn". Chernyshevsky declared outright that the people who made the university regulations actually wanted to deprive the majority of those who entered the university of any possibility of studying. "If the author of the article and those who agree with him consider it necessary to prove that this was not the aim in view when the regulations were drawn up, let them publish the documents relating to the meetings at which the regulations were decided on."

The anonymous author of the article "*To Study or Not To Study?*" directed his charge of unwillingness to study not only against the students but against the whole of Russian society. Chernyshevsky took advantage of this to carry the controversy about the unrest at the university on to a more general field. His opponent allowed that there were certain signs of desire in Russian society to study. Proof of this, in his opinion, was the "hundreds" of new periodicals, the "dozens" of Sunday schools for adults that

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\* *Sovr.*, 1862, March, the article "French Laws on Matters of the Press".

were appearing in Russia. "*Hundreds* of new periodicals, but where did he count the hundreds?" exclaims Chernyshevsky. "And hundreds really would be necessary. But does the author want to know why hundreds of new periodicals are not being founded, and they should? It is because under the conditions of our censorship it is impossible for any lively periodical to exist anywhere, except in a few large towns. Every rich commercial town should have several, even if only small, newspapers; several local news-sheets should be published in every province. They do not exist, because they are not allowed to.... *Dozens of Sunday schools for adults...* Now that is no exaggeration, it is not the same as with the *hundreds of new periodicals*: in an empire with a population of over 60 million, the Sunday schools for adults are indeed to be counted only in dozens. Yet there should have been tens of thousands of them, and it would have been possible to establish quickly tens of thousands of them, and for at least many thousands to be now in existence. How is it that there are only dozens? Because they are so suspect, so hampered, so circumscribed, that the people who are most loyal to the work of teaching in them have all desire to teach driven out of them."

After referring to the existence of "hundreds" of new periodicals and "dozens" of Sunday schools for adults as apparent signs of the desire of society to study, the author of the article which Chernyshevsky was analysing hastened to add that these signs were deceptive. "You hear shouting in the streets," he recounts mournfully, "something or other is said to have happened somewhere, and you involuntarily hang your head and are disillusioned...." "Excuse me, Mr. Author of the article," objects Chernyshevsky, "what is the shouting you hear in the streets? The shouting of constables and police officers—we hear their shouting too. Are you speaking of that shouting? *You are told something or other has happened somewhere...*—what sort of thing, for example? There a theft has occurred, here authority has been exceeded, there the rights of the weak have been violated, here there has been connivance with the strong—we are incessantly being told this sort of thing. Because of this shouting which everyone hears, and this constant talk, one does indeed involuntarily hang one's head and become disillusioned...."

The accuser of the students attacked them for their apparent intolerance of the opinions of others, for having recourse in their protests to whistling, pickled apples and similar "street weapons". Chernyshevsky argues that "whistling and pickled apples are not *street weapons*: street weapons are bayonets, rifle-butts and sabres". He asks his opponent to recall "whether it was the students who used these street weapons against anyone, or whether they were used against the students... and whether there was any need to use them against the students".

It is easy to understand the impression such articles of Chernyshevsky's were bound to make on the Russian students. When, subsequently, student demonstrations occurred again at the end of the sixties, the article "Have We Learned the Lesson?" was read at student gatherings as being the best defence of their just demands. It is also easy to understand what the attitude of the powers-that-be must have been to such defiant articles. The great writer's "dangerous" influence on the student youth was becoming more and more obvious to them.

Apart from his journalistic work, Chernyshevsky was zealously engaged in propagating the main theoretical theses of his world outlook. The polemic with the representatives of Russian vulgar economy of that time showed him how little economic information there was in Russian educated society. He decided to remedy this deficiency and embarked upon the translation and exposition of Mill. A long series of economic articles by him was published over two years (1860-61) on the pages of the *Sovremennik*. We have already expressed our view of the method and devices of economic research employed by Chernyshevsky. In a second article, which will be specially devoted to this subject, we shall make a detailed analysis of the economic teaching of our author.<sup>61</sup> For the time being, therefore, we shall confine ourselves merely to the following remark. The choice of Mill's book as a textbook for the dissemination of correct politico-economic views among the Russian reading public can on no account be regarded as a happy one. Mill's economic views are so unclear and inconsistent that they could not possibly leave any clear economic concepts in the mind of the reader, in spite of all the corrections and additions made by Chernyshevsky. At times the influence of Mill's "syncretism" is clearly felt on Chernyshevsky himself. In a hurry to turn to the criticism of existing social relations from the point of view of sound "theory", Chernyshevsky does not analyse such views of Mill's which even the science of that day could certainly not have recognised as correct. In places it seems as though Chernyshevsky himself shares these erroneous concepts.<sup>62</sup> We shall not, however, dwell upon them in detail here.

In West-European economic literature of the day Chernyshevsky could have found writers far more worthy of serious attention. On the question of the relations of labour to capital Rodbertus is a real giant by comparison with Mill. On the other sections it would have been more useful to translate Ricardo's book and furnish it with notes and addenda. Ricardo has a great deal to teach even the informed reader, whereas even the informed reader is likely to become confused under the influence of Mill. The pernicious influence on our reading public of this man, who spent all his life falling between two stools, became particularly marked later, when Chernyshevsky's notes and addenda to his book

were banned and only his translation of it remained on sale. By drawing its economic concepts from Mill, the Russian reading public had no economic concepts whatsoever, one might say.

Almost simultaneously with the popularisation of Mill, Chernyshevsky undertook the translation into Russian of Schlosser, an historian greatly beloved by him and indeed most worthy of respect.

## XI

At that time Chernyshevsky was about 34 years of age. He was in the prime of his mental powers, and who knows to what heights he might not have risen in his development! But he had not long to live in freedom. He was the recognised leader of the extreme party, an outspoken champion of materialism and socialism. He was considered the "ringleader" of the revolutionary youth, and was blamed for all their outbursts and unrest. As always happens in such cases, rumour exaggerated the affair and even ascribed to Chernyshevsky intentions and actions which were foreign to him. In *Prologue to a Prologue* Chernyshevsky himself describes the liberal sympathetic gossip spread in St. Petersburg concerning Volgin's (i.e., his own) alleged relations with the London circle of Russian exiles. The gossip was occasioned by the most insignificant incidents that had absolutely nothing to do with politics. And, as usual, things did not stop at mere gossip. The "protective" press had long been engaged in literary denunciations of Chernyshevsky. In 1862, the *Sovremennik* was suspended for an indefinite period. Then came non-literary denunciations as well. "The Director of the Third Department of His Imperial Majesty's Own Chancellery," said the indictment of Chernyshevsky, "has received an anonymous letter warning the government against Chernyshevsky, 'that youth ringleader and wily socialist'; he himself has announced that he will never be convicted; he is said to be a pernicious agitator, and people ask to be spared from such a man; all Chernyshevsky's former friends, liberal-minded people, seeing that his tendencies were finding expression in deeds and not merely in words, have dissociated themselves from him. 'Unless you remove Chernyshevsky,' writes the author of the letter, 'there will be trouble and bloodshed; they are a band of rabid demagogues, of reckless people.... Perhaps they will eventually be eliminated, but just think how much innocent blood will be shed because of them.... There are committees of such socialists in Voronezh, Saratov, Tambov and elsewhere, and everywhere they inflame the youth. Send Chernyshevsky away wherever you like, but be quick to deprive him of the opportunity to act.... Deliver us from Chernyshevsky for the sake of public peace.'"

Chernyshevsky was arrested on July 7, 1862. Since, in the



words of the denouncer, Chernyshevsky himself had said that he would never be convicted, the blue knights of the Third Department hastened to concoct false evidence. How Chernyshevsky's case was conducted can be seen from the fact that the procurator was not ashamed to cite a letter from an anonymous denouncer even in the indictment, whereas according to Russian law "an investigation shall not be carried out in accordance with denunciations in anonymous libels and anonymous letters" (Art. 52, Book II, Crim. Law, Vol. XV, Code of Laws, 1857 ed.). Even before Chernyshevsky's arrest, a certain Vetoshkin<sup>63</sup> was detained, who was said to be carrying a letter from Herzen to Serno-Solov'yevich containing the following postscript: "Chernyshevsky and I intend to publish the *Sovremennik* here or in Geneva." It was on the basis of this postscript that Chernyshevsky was arrested. In the meantime, however, Herzen maintained in No. 193 of the *Kolokol* that he had never said a word in his letters about his plans for literary activity together with Chernyshevsky. "I have never been in correspondence with Chernyshevsky. I could not have written that he and I intended to publish the *Sovremennik* because I had no information whatsoever about whether or not he wished to publish the *Sovremennik* outside Russia.... The banning of the *Sovremennik* was announced in the newspapers, and we immediately suggested loudly and publicly to the publishers of the *Sovremennik* that we should print it at our own expense abroad. There was never the slightest response to our offer. How could I have written about this in the affirmative and moreover to Russia? Perhaps I also serve in the secret police?" But when did the zealous servants of the Russian government stop at lies and falsification? A few papers and letters which proved nothing were found during a search at Chernyshevsky's home, such widely known denouncers as Vsevolod Kostomarov were brought into the case, the diary of the accused was unearthed in which incidentally, even before his marriage, he had written that he "might be arrested any day", and the job was done. Chernyshevsky was brought before the Court of the Senate on the following charge: 1) of relations with Herzen; 2) of composing the seditious proclamation "To the Manorial Peasants", which he was alleged to have given to the denouncer V. Kostomarov for printing, and 3) of preparations for a revolt. It is interesting that the only evidence of "preparations for a revolt" was a letter carried by the same Kostomarov to a certain Alexei Nikolayevich, which says in the vaguest terms that there is no point in losing time, that it is "now or never" and that the unknown Alexei Nikolayevich has no energy. Chernyshevsky persistently denied that this letter belonged to him, but even if it did belong to him, all that could be proved on the basis of it is his participation in the setting up of a secret printing press. "For about a year now you have been

making fools of us with your press, and now the time has come beyond which we cannot delay, if we wish our cause to be won. To which cause the letter refers is quite unknown. True, it does mention the printing of a manifesto, but not all manifestoes are "preparations for a revolt". One would think even the Third Department's lawyers should have understood that it is a long way from setting up a secret printing press and printing manifestoes to preparations for a revolt. They did understand this, of course. But they understood even better that Chernyshevsky was an immense, irreplaceable revolutionary force.

There is nothing improbable in the assumption that Chernyshevsky belonged to a revolutionary society. On the contrary, such an assumption is perfectly probable. But where in the civilised world is *probability* regarded as *legal evidence*? Nowhere, except Russia, and even in Russia only at political trials.

The lack of fastidiousness of the Directorate of the Public Prosecutor with regard to the evidence in Chernyshevsky's case is demonstrated by the following fact. The indictment cites a letter from the accused to his wife, which was written already from the fortress. "My life and yours belong to history; hundreds of years will pass and our names will still be dear to people, who will recall them with gratitude when those who lived with us are no more." Apart from these words, which clearly indicate "preparations for a revolt", the indictment cites the following lines from the same letter. Informing his wife of his intention to compile *An Encyclopaedia of Knowledge and Life*, Chernyshevsky writes: "Since the time of Aristotle no one has done that which I wish to do, and I shall be a good teacher of people throughout the centuries, as Aristotle was." What do these lines prove? Why should the compiler of the indictment refer to them? It is obvious! A man who is prepared to publish an encyclopaedia is also perfectly prepared to "revolt"!

The investigation of Chernyshevsky's case dragged on for about two years. He persistently denied the accusations made against him and evidently hoped that he would soon manage to escape from the claws of the Russian eagle. His intention to publish an *Encyclopaedia* indicates this hope. The novel *What Is To Be Done?*, written by him when he was already in prison, is also full of the brightest hopes. Incidentally, in this novel the hopes are linked not with legal considerations about the impossibility of sentencing him because of lack of evidence, but with the swift triumph of the emancipation movement in Russia. Allusions to the proximity of this triumph are frequently found in the novel. In the Epilogue there are even some vague references to the year 1866 (the novel was completed in April 1864<sup>64</sup>), in which something special was to happen in Russia. A lady, who appears in the final scenes of the novel and is wearing mourning for a dear one

who is evidently in prison or exile, drives along the streets of St. Petersburg in 1866, gay and joyful, accompanied by her liberated friend. We can only guess, of course, at what the author meant by this.

## XII\*

We shall not expound the content of *What Is To Be Done?* Who has not read and re-read this famous work? Who has not been enthralled by it, who has not become purer, better, brighter and bolder under its beneficial influence? Who has not been impressed by the moral purity of the main characters? Who, after reading this novel, has not reflected on his own life, not put his own aspirations and inclinations to the test? All of us have drawn from it both moral strength and faith in a better future,

*And great trust  
In selfless labour....*<sup>65</sup>

Our obscurantists have frequently pointed to the absence in the novel of artistic merits, to its obvious tendentiousness. Outwardly these accusations are justified: the novel really is highly tendentious and possesses very few artistic merits. But let them show us any fine, truly artistic work of Russian literature which could vie with the novel *What Is To Be Done?* in its influence on the moral and intellectual development of the country! No one will show us such a work, because there has never been and probably never will be one. From the time when printing-presses were introduced in Russia right up to our day not a single printed work has had the same success in Russia as *What Is To Be Done?* Try, after that, to argue the tendentiousness of the author, try to repeat that he is not a writer! The reading public will tell you quite rightly that this is of no concern to it, that all novels are good, except boring novels—and it was delighted, not bored with Chernyshevsky's novel: that is quite enough for it. Finally, Messrs. the obscurantists, you also do not avoid tendentiousness in your works of fiction. You also are not averse to writing a tendentious novel or story. The trouble is that no one reads *your* tendentious works, no one gets enthralled by them. Whence this difference, what do you think? Does it not show that there are tendencies and tendencies, that there are some tendencies which in no way prevent the success of the works tinged with them?

What was the secret of the colossal, unparalleled success of *What Is To Be Done?* It lay precisely in the character of its tendency, in the fact that the ideas expressed by the author were being disseminated at exactly the right time. In themselves, these

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\* [See below the version of the beginning of this chapter written for the German edition, p. 166 of this volume.]

ideas were not new; Chernyshevsky had taken them wholly from West-European literature. In France,\* George Sand had much earlier advocated free and, most important, *sincere, honest* relations in the love of a man for a woman. As regards the moral demands she puts on love, Lucrezia Floriani differs in no way from Vera Pavlovna. The ideas of George Sand met with the most fervent sympathy in our country as early as the forties. Belinsky was an ardent admirer of this authoress. In his articles he often advocated her views on freedom and sincerity in love. We know how he reproached Pushkin's Tatyana because, while loving Onegin, she did not follow the dictates of her heart and, being "given to another", continued to live with her aged husband whom she did not love. In their attitude to women, the best "people of the forties" adhered to the same principles as those of Lopukhov and Kirsanov.<sup>66</sup> However, prior to the appearance of the novel *What Is To Be Done?*, these principles were shared only by a "select" handful; the mass of the reading public did not understand them at all. Even Herzen hesitated to expound them fully and clearly in his novel *Who Is To Blame?* With the appearance of *What Is To Be Done?* the question was posed with the utmost clarity and force. There was no more room left for doubt. Thinking people were faced with the alternative of being guided in love by the principles of Lopukhov and Kirsanov, or of bowing to the sanctity of marriage and resorting, should a new sentiment arise, to the old, tested method of secret amorous adventures, or else completely subduing all affection in their hearts in view of the fact that they *belonged* to a marriage partner, whom they no longer loved. And the choice had to be made quite consciously. Chernyshevsky dealt with the issue in such a way that what had been natural instinctiveness and sincerity in love became utterly impossible. Mind control extended to love, and the general public adopted a conscious view of the relations between man and woman. This was particularly important in our country in the sixties. The reforms which Russia had undergone turned upside down not only her social but also her family relations. A ray of light reached into recesses that had been in complete darkness. Russian people were compelled to examine themselves, to take a sober look at their relation to their kin, to society and family. A new element came to play a big role in family relations, in love and friendship—*convictions*, which formerly only the very

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\* Let us note in passing that Goethe's *Wahlverwandschaften* and some of his dramas also represent a word in defence of free love. This is well understood by many German historians of German literature who, while not daring to decry such an authoritative writer, and at the same time not daring to agree with him because of their own philistine virtuousness, usually mutter something totally unintelligible about the apparently strange paradoxes of the great German.

smallest handful of "idealists" had possessed. Differences of conviction led to unexpected ruptures. A woman "given in marriage" to a certain man often discovered with horror that her lawful "possessor" was an obscurantist, a bribe-taker, a flatterer groveling before his superiors. A man who had enjoyed the "possession" of his beautiful wife, and was unexpectedly affected by the current of new ideas, often realised in dismay that what his charming plaything was interested in was not at all the "new people" or the "new views", but new dresses and dances, and also the title and salary of her husband. All explanations and exhortations are in vain, the beautiful woman turns into a veritable shrew as soon as her husband tries to say that he "would gladly be of service", but that "servility is nauseating".<sup>67</sup> How is one to act? What is one to do? The famous novel showed how to act and what to do. Under its influence people who had previously regarded themselves as the legal property of others began to repeat with its author: O, filth, O, filth, he who dares to possess another!—and there awoke in them an awareness of human dignity, and, often after the bitterest spiritual and family storms, they became independent, organised their life in keeping with their convictions, and consciously progressed towards a rational human goal. In view of this alone it can be said that the name of Chernyshevsky belongs to history, and it will still be dear to people, who will recall it with gratitude when those who were personally acquainted with the *great Russian enlightener* are no more.

Obscurantists accused Chernyshevsky of preaching the "*emancipation of the flesh*" in his novel. Nothing could be more absurd and hypocritical than this accusation! Take any novel about high society life, recall the amorous intrigues of the nobility and bourgeoisie in all countries and among all peoples—and you will see that Chernyshevsky had no need whatsoever to preach the emancipation of the flesh, which had long been an established fact. On the contrary, his novel preaches the *emancipation of the human spirit, the human intellect*. No one influenced by the trend of this novel would have any desire for the boudoir adventures without which life was empty for "society" people, who had a hypocritical respect for conventional morality. Messrs. the obscurantists understand perfectly the strictly moral nature of Chernyshevsky's work and are annoyed with him precisely because of his moral strictness. They sense that people like the heroes of *What Is To Be Done?* must regard them as totally debauched and must feel the utmost contempt for them.

Some people also remark that it was alright for Lopukhov and Vera Pavlovna to show their lofty feeling, because they had no children: had they had children they would have been obliged to follow the usual path in their love. Chernyshevsky himself says that had Vera Pavlovna had children she would perhaps have

acted otherwise. He understood perfectly that the question of relations between a man and a woman is closely linked with the question of the family, without which people cannot live in the society which exists today. He knew that for love to be completely free it was necessary to reorganise all family and, consequently, all social relations. But he did not stop at this thought, because the relations of love into which people will enter in the future are one thing, and the humanity and rationality which are possible in the present day in a marriage between educated people is quite another. If the descendants of Vera Pavlovna and Lopukhov had multiplied as the sand of the sea, they would have remained sensible and humane people, and would therefore not have poisoned each other's lives because of involuntary deviations of feeling which were independent of their will. It was perhaps even intentionally that Chernyshevsky portrayed in his novel the simplest case: the awakening of a new love in a married woman with no children. By explaining on the example of this case the mutual obligations of decent people, he could then expect that readers who had understood him would themselves decide how married couples with children should behave in similar situations: under the influence of different personal considerations they might behave differently; but once they had understood Chernyshevsky's view, they would never behave like people of the old school.

### XIII

As we know, the dissemination in Russia of the great ideas of truth, science, and art was the main, one might say, the only aim in our author's life. It was in the interests of this dissemination that he wrote the novel *What Is To Be Done?* It would be wrong to regard this novel merely as the preaching of rational relations in love. The love of Vera Pavlovna for Lopukhov and Kirsanov is only the canvas on which other, more important ideas of the author's are set. We have already spoken of the associations set up by Vera Pavlovna. In making her undertake this activity, the author wished to point out the practical tasks of socialists in Russia to his followers. In Vera Pavlovna's dreams the author's socialist ideals are painted in bright colours. The picture of socialist society drawn by him is modelled entirely on Fourier. Chernyshevsky does not offer the reader anything new. He merely acquaints him with conclusions which West-European thought reached long ago. Here again it must be mentioned that Fourier's views were known in Russia even in the forties. The "Petrashevtsi" were accused and found guilty of Fourierism. But Chernyshevsky spread Fourier's ideas on a previously unprecedented scale. He introduced them to the public at large. Later, even Chernyshevsky's admirers in our country would shrug their shoulders in talk-

ing of Vera Pavlovna's dreams. The phalansteries of which she dreamed seemed rather naive to some later. It was said that the famous writer could have talked to the reader about something nearer to our hearts and more practical. Even people who called themselves socialists reasoned thus. We must confess that we regard this matter quite differently. In Vera Pavlovna's dreams we see a feature of Chernyshevsky's socialist views to which, unfortunately, Russian socialists have still not paid sufficient attention. In these dreams we are attracted by Chernyshevsky's full realisation of the fact that the socialist system must be based on the widespread application to production of the technical forces developed by the bourgeois period. In Vera Pavlovna's dreams huge armies of labour are jointly engaged in production, passing from Central Asia to Russia, from hot climate countries to the cold countries. All this, of course, could have been conceived with the aid of Fourier as well, but it is evident even from the subsequent history of so-called Russian socialism that the Russian reading public was not aware of this. In their ideas of socialist society our revolutionaries frequently went so far as to conceive it in the form of a federation of peasant communes, cultivating their fields with the same antiquated plough as that used to scrape the soil in the time of Basil the Blind.\* But obviously such "socialism" cannot be regarded as socialism. The emancipation of labour can come about only through the emancipation of man from the "power of the land" and nature in general. And this emancipation has made absolutely indispensable those armies of labour and that extensive application of modern productive forces to production of which Chernyshevsky spoke in Vera Pavlovna's dreams and which we have completely forgotten in our desire to be "practical".

That Chernyshevsky's socialist views were not understood by many of his readers can be seen from D. I. Pisarev's article, excellent in the literary respect, *"The Thinking Proletariat"*, which is an analysis of *What Is To Be Done?* Pisarev is in raptures about Vera Pavlovna, Lopukhov and Kirsanov. For him they are the true representatives of the "Bazarov type"<sup>69</sup> placed in the most suitable conditions for them.\*\* They are new people in the full sense of the word. But how does he picture to himself the character and activity of the new people? First of all, he seizes on the fact that all of them are engaged in the natural sciences. The natural sciences were, as we know, the alpha and omega of knowledge

\* [See below the addendum to this passage for the German edition, p. 167 of this volume.]

\*\* But Chernyshevsky himself hardly regarded his heroes as representatives of the "Bazarov type". The *Sovremennik* saw Bazarov as a caricature of the "younger generation" (see the well-known article of M. A. Antonovich "An Asmodeus of Our Time" in the March issue of the *Sovremennik* for 1862).

for Pisarev. Take up one of these *real* sciences, work hard, organise your relations with your wife and friends sensibly—and you will thereby become a “thinking proletarian”, you will work for the good of others who are not yet thinking proletarians, you will be completely “*at one*” with them. There is not a word in the article about the fact that the “thinking” proletarian could have different, broader tasks with regard to other proletarians. It is, of course, good to set up, like Vera Pavlovna, this or that association, but that is not the main thing. The main thing is to organise one’s private life sensibly and engage in the natural sciences. Pisarev does not understand Rakhmetov at all. He is, perhaps, not averse to praising Rakhmetov (one is bound to praise him, because Chernyshevsky himself does), but, not understanding this type, he involuntarily reveals his antipathy towards him. For Pisarev the real, ideal “new people” are Vera Pavlovna, Lopukhov and Kirsanov. Whereas, according to Chernyshevsky, Rakhmetov is to Lopukhov and his closest friends as a huge castle to an ordinary house. Rakhmetov is portrayed precisely in order to show the relative ordinariness of people like Lopukhov. Lopukhov is a man of personal relationships. He has great sympathy for socialism, but engages in social activities only in passing, only when the occasion happens to arise. Rakhmetov devotes all his time and all his thought to society. He knows no personal joy or sorrow at all. He has even decided never to become intimate with a woman. He is therefore completely insured against the type of event in which the character of Lopukhov and Kirsanov is delineated. He is a man devoted to an idea. Only in the service of this idea can the rich forces of this iron character reveal themselves. In personal relationships he is difficult, if you like, simply insufferable, as Vera Pavlovna tells him bluntly. And he himself is aware of it and not in the slightest perturbed by this awareness. A big ship has far to sail.

Chernyshevsky was present at the birth of the new type of “new people” in our country—the revolutionary. He joyfully welcomed the emergence of this new type and could not deny himself the pleasure of depicting at least a vague profile of him. At the same time, he foresaw with sorrow how many trials and sufferings were in store for the Russian revolutionary, whose life must be one of severe struggle and great self-sacrifice. And so, in Rakhmetov, Chernyshevsky presents us with the true ascetic. Rakhmetov positively tortures himself. He is completely “merciless towards himself”, as his landlady says. He even decides to test whether he can endure torture by spending a whole night lying on a length of felt with nails sticking through it. Many people, including Pisarev, regarded this as mere eccentricity. We agree that some aspects of Rakhmetov’s character could have been drawn differently. But the character as a whole nevertheless



remains completely true to life. Every prominent Russian revolutionary possessed much of the Rakhmetov spirit.

Today the revolutionary from the "intelligentsia" has almost finished playing his part. He no longer has any originality, he is repeating himself, growing shallow. His place must, and will, be taken by revolutionaries from the working class, those true "children of the people". But he has had his own glorious history and therefore one cannot help marvelling at the perceptiveness of Chernyshevsky, who succeeded in portraying so well and so accurately the main features, at least, of this type which was then only just emerging.<sup>70</sup>

#### XIV

The Senate sentenced Chernyshevsky to civil execution followed by fourteen years of penal servitude in the mines, and then exile in Siberia for life. In the final sentence the penal servitude was reduced to 7 years. On June 13, 1864, in Mytninsky Square in Peski the sentence on the great Russian socialist was read out publicly. Pale, emaciated and exhausted, he was brought to the pillory and stood in silence, his back turned to the official who was reading out the sentence. The ceremony of the breaking of the sword was performed over the condemned man, and then his hands were pushed by the executioner into the rings riveted to the scaffold. At this moment a bouquet fell on the scaffold, and shouts of sympathy for the condemned man rang out in the crowd which packed Mytninsky Square.... Chernyshevsky was sent off to Siberia.

The notorious Muravyov the Hangman wished to charge him in connection with the Karakozov affair, but Alexander II objected to this for some reason, and Chernyshevsky remained in Siberia. He spent 20 years there, and at the insistence of the Chief of the Gendarmes, Count Shuvalov, he was not included in any amnesties. At the end of the seven years of penal servitude, he was sent to Vilyuisk, Yakutsk Region, where the only people he could talk to were the Cossacks and gendarmes who guarded him. Chernyshevsky lived in this new imprisonment in a remote and extremely unhealthy corner of Siberia right up to 1883, when he was allowed to go and live in Astrakhan. One can only marvel at the way that this physically feeble, weak-chested man endured the many persecutions which befell him.

We shall not speak here of the many attempts to free Chernyshevsky, since they are well enough known to the public.<sup>71</sup>

Immediately upon return from Siberia Chernyshevsky again embarked vigorously on literary work. He diligently translated Weber's *Universal History*\* and wrote several articles for period-

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\* [Allgemeine Weltgeschichte.]

icals. It is interesting that one of the last articles written by our author before exile was "Materials for a Biography of N. A. Dobrolyubov" and one of the first long articles written by him on return from exile was a continuation of these "Materials". Evidently the memory of his gifted and beloved comrade, who had died so prematurely, never left Chernyshevsky.

About the articles written by him after exile we shall speak in our second article. For the present we shall merely say that, although from the language and manner it was easy to recognise Chernyshevsky, his former brilliance and former depth of thought were no longer to be found in them. His article on Darwin is positively weak, extremely weak, so that it produces a most painful impression.<sup>72</sup> Reading it, you feel that you are dealing with a writer who has been utterly shaken and broken. The small portion of freedom granted to him before his death could not resurrect the former Chernyshevsky. The former Chernyshevsky was killed by the sentence of the Senate, and never has the Russian government committed a greater crime in respect of the intellectual development of Russia. That is why, in concluding this first article, we repeat with great sympathy Herzen's words, written when he heard the sentence passed on Chernyshevsky: "May this immense crime descend as a curse upon the government, upon the society, upon the base, corrupt journalism, which brought this persecution, which whipped it up because of personal scores. It allowed the government to murder prisoners-of-war in Poland, and in Russia to approve the sentences of the savage ignoramuses of the Senate and the grey-haired villains of the State Council.... And then wretched people, worthless sluggards, say that one should not curse this band of rogues and scoundrels which governs us!"

[ADDENDA FOR THE GERMAN EDITION  
OF THE BOOK  
N. G. CHERNYSHEVSKY  
(1894)]

*Appendix to p[age] 93 of the Sots[ial]-Demokrat\**

(It was to the dissemination in his homeland of the noble ideas of truth, art, and science that Chernyshevsky wished to devote his powers.)<sup>73</sup>

He became a writer. The appearance of his dissertation in print attracted the attention of the editorial board of the *Sovremennik*, published since 1847 by Panayev and the poet Nekrasov. Chernyshevsky was offered a permanent post on the journal, and even the whole of the criticism section was put in his charge. Later, in 1859, when the *Sovremennik* was allowed to write about politics as well, Chernyshevsky also took charge of the political section. He worked truly indefatigably. Usually his articles were distributed among the various sections of the journal as follows: firstly, he contributed a long article on some theoretical problem, then he wrote a political survey, made a review of Russian, and sometimes foreign literature, reviewed several new books and, lastly, by way of relaxation and diversion, as it were, he made polemical sorties against his opponents. This persistently hard work was explained to a considerable extent by the fact that even among the contributors to the *Sovremennik*, particularly in the early years of Chernyshevsky's literary activity, there were few people who had matured as far as his views on things. In the novel *Prologue to a Prologue* the writer Volgin, under whose name Chernyshevsky portrayed himself,\*\* says bluntly that he is compelled to write a great deal for fear that others would write nonsense. Incidentally, from the time that Chernyshevsky became the main contributor to the *Sovremennik*, all fresh, budding literary forces were naturally drawn towards the journal. Thus, already in 1856, Dobrolyubov, who soon became famous and whom Chernyshevsky placed—with excessive modesty—far above himself, began to write for it. The importance of journalism was very great in our country at that time. Today

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\* [See p. 70 of this volume, and German edition, p. 31.]

\*\* Chernyshevsky's native town, Saratov, stands on the River Volga.

public opinion has far outgrown journalism (constricted by the censorship); in the forties it was still too young for it, but the late fifties and early sixties were the age of the greatest concord between public opinion and journalism and of the greatest influence of journalism on public opinion. Only in such conditions was it possible to have the passionate interest in literary activity and the sincere belief in the importance of literary propaganda which one finds in all the eminent writers of that time. All that was old, traditional, inherited from one's ancestors, was subjected to criticism, all that was new was discussed from the point of view of "reason", which was called upon, it seemed, to refashion all the views of Russian readers, from the most general philosophical questions to questions of whether children should be swaddled in the cradle and beaten at school age. This age in Russian life is extremely reminiscent of the time in France when the great enlightener Voltaire wrote about everything under the sun, from Newton's theory to the education of young ladies.

Chernyshevsky's journal stood at the head of the literary movement in Russia at that time. It was read avidly by all the "new people",<sup>74</sup> and feared greatly by all those who, for this or that reason, would have liked to impede this movement. Fear naturally engenders hatred. As the influence of the *Sovremennik* grew, the greater were the number of attacks launched from the most varied quarters on the journal in general and on Chernyshevsky in particular. The contributors to the *Sovremennik* began to be regarded as dangerous people who were destroying all the "foundations of society". Some of the "advanced people" of the forties, who had at one time been friends of the most influential writer of that day, Belinsky, repudiated the *Sovremennik* as an organ of the "nihilists", and began to declare that Belinsky would never have approved of the trend adopted by it. Such was I. S. Turgenev's attitude.\* And the Slavophil radical Herzen, who attacked the "jaundiced" in his London *Kolokol*, alleging that it was quite impossible to please them, acted in almost the same way. The *Sovremennik*, for its part, replied in similar coin. It responded to the attacks with sharp polemical articles and, moreover, ridiculed them in a special supplement bearing the title of *Svistok*. Chernyshevsky also wrote occasionally for the *Svistok*, but the main contributor there was Dobrolyubov, who possessed a remarkable talent for writing parodies in verse on the bombastic, high-sounding talk of the "protectors". The "protectors" attempted to fight the *Sovremennik* with the same weapon, but very soon realised that "les rieurs" (the laughers) were not on their side.

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\* Chernyshevsky relates that Turgenev could still tolerate him to some extent, but had no patience at all with Dobrolyubov. "You're just a snake, but Dobrolyubov is a cobra," he said to Chernyshevsky.

Chernyshevsky plunged into the literary battle, so that writing the history of this period of his life means writing the history of his literary activity. Obviously we shall not ignore this activity, but let us first see how he interpreted the ideas of "truth, art, and science" which he expounded and defended in the *Sovremennik*.

In his philosophical views he was a follower of Feuerbach, for whom he had the greatest respect, ranking him on a level with Hegel, which says a great deal, for Chernyshevsky, in spite of the increasingly widespread prejudice of the "thinking proletarians", considered Hegel to be one of the most brilliant thinkers of all times and peoples.\* As a follower of Feuerbach, Chernyshevsky opposed philosophical idealism and dualism. "The principle underlying the philosophical view of human life," he wrote in his article "The Anthropological Principle in Philosophy", "is the idea, worked out by the natural sciences, of the unity of the human organism; the observations of physiologists, zoologists and medical men have driven away all thought of dualism in man. Philosophy sees him as medicine, physiology and chemistry see him. These sciences prove that no dualism is evident in man, and philosophy adds that if man possessed another nature, in addition to his real nature, this other nature would inevitably reveal itself in some way, but since it does not reveal itself in any way, since everything that takes place and manifests itself in man originates solely from his real nature, he cannot have another nature."\*\* This is quite clear. But it does not follow from this that Chernyshevsky was a consistent materialist in the most modern meaning of the word. Feuerbach himself, as we know, was still very far from such consistency, and the errors of the teacher left a deep mark on the world outlook of the pupil. Chernyshevsky's materialism is far more obvious in his "anthropological" than in his historical views. Regarding man as a product of circumstances, Chernyshevsky adopts a most humane attitude even to those unpleasant manifestations of corrupted human nature (in which idealists see only "evil intent" deserving strict punishment...).

[Note to page 105]\*\*

(In general, very noticeable in Chernyshevsky's views on rational egoism is the endeavour, characteristic of all "periods of enlightenment", to seek support for morality in reason and an expla-

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\* In fact Feuerbach was far lower and poorer than Hegel, as was brilliantly shown by Engels and as Marx pointed out in a letter to the editor of the Berlin *Sozial-Demokrat* printed shortly after the death of Proudhon.

\*\* We would again remind our German readers that Chernyshevsky had to express himself very cautiously because he was writing in a Russian journal which was subject to censorship.

\*\*\* [See p. 82 of this volume, and German edition, p. 37.]

nation of the individual's character and behaviour in his more or less hard-headed calculation.)

Xenophon in his *Erinnerungen an Sokrates* (6, 27) quotes the following argument of this wise man in support of the idea that it is better to be friends with honest people than with rogues: "Es ist aber vortheilhafter, den Rechtschaffenen gutes zu erweisen, da ihre Zahl geringer ist, als den Schlechteren, deren Zahl grösser ist, denn die Schlechten bedürfen weit mehr Wohltaten, als die Rechtschaffenen."\* This is the complete triumph and final limit of rationality, after which it must immediately reach the absurd.

[*Manuscript continuation of page 134*]\*\*

(But let us return to our author. Knowing the general character of his views, knowing the merits and defects of his characteristic interpretation of "the noble ideas of truth, science, and art", we can now easily form a picture of his literary activity.)

The first practical question with which Chernyshevsky was confronted was that of the abolition of serfdom. At that time, when this question had only just been placed on the order of the day by the government of Alexander II, advanced people in Russia assumed that it would be easy to show this government the extent to which its own interests coincided with the interests of the emancipated peasantry. Some even thought that this would be clear to the government without any explanation. "Thou hast won, Galilean!" wrote Herzen, addressing the young tsar.

About the same time he publicly proclaimed a toast to the Emancipator Tsar.<sup>76</sup> For a while Chernyshevsky also appears to have cherished such illusions. At least, he did his utmost to explain to the government where its properly understood interests lay. How much he wrote on the peasant question can be seen from the fact that in a special foreign edition the articles by him relating to this constitute a large volume of very small print. He advocated the emancipation of the peasants with land, of course, and maintained that the government would find no difficulty whatever in redeeming the lands allotted to the peasants. He supported this thesis both with general theoretical considerations and with the most detailed estimates.

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\* ["It is, however, more profitable to do good to the righteous, for their number is smaller, than to the wicked, whose number is larger, for the wicked have need of far more good deeds than the righteous."]

\*\* [See p. 113 of this volume, and German edition, p. 72.]

[*Manuscript continuation of page 148*]\*

(If our "intelligentsia" adheres so firmly to the commune to this day, it is thanks to the ineradicable influence of Chernyshevsky.)

One of his main arguments in favour of the commune is that the commune will save us from the "ulcer of proletarianisation". He evidently frequently recalled the arguments of reactionaries, such as Baron Haxthausen who saw the "ulcer of proletarianisation" as the main source of the revolutionary movement in Western Europe. He occasionally had doubts as to the advantages which the removal of the said ulcer would have for the cause of Russian progress. But he quickly banished such doubts. "The agricultural class, although it has always had use of the land under the commune system in our country, has not always appeared in ... history with an immovable character.... There is no need to discuss ... the character of the West-European peasant. We would merely point out that the Cossacks came for the most part from the peasants and that from the beginning of the seventeenth century nearly all the dramatic episodes in the history of the Russian people were carried out by the energy of the agricultural population." Here, as we see, the peasant wars are ranked in their historical importance with the revolutionary movements of the modern proletariat, a confusion which is quite impossible for the socialist of our time, but quite unnoticeable for the Russian revolutionaries of Chernyshevsky's day.

Liberal economists regarded the commune as a backward form of ownership of the land, characteristic only of primitive and savage peoples. In countering this argument, Chernyshevsky referred to Hegel. The third and final phase in the development of any phenomenon, he said, is very similar to its first phase. Peoples began with communal land tenure and they are bound to return to it in the more or less near future. True, the West-European peoples passed from primitive communal land tenure to private ownership of the land, as they were bound to do for a time. But this intermediate period can be completely by-passed by other countries which have embarked on the path of historical development later and had the experience of Western Europe before them. Russia is such a country. There is no need whatsoever for her to introduce at home a form of ownership of the land which West-European history has already clearly shown to be invalid.

The article which contains this argument of Chernyshevsky's<sup>76</sup> was written so skilfully and so outwardly convincingly that the liberal opponents of the village commune could find no objection to it. This fact alone shows how abstract their own views on social

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\* [See p. 127 of this volume, and German edition, p. 85.]

questions were. Chernyshevsky's arguments could be convincing only for people who placed themselves "*above society*", only for *utopians* of various trends. It is true that in Hegel all development—in logic, in nature, and in society—takes place *out of itself*, by the force of its immanent dialectics. If Chernyshevsky wished to defend communal land tenure from the viewpoint of Hegel, he should have shown that the inner relations of the Russian village commune themselves lead to the creation of a social system which, firstly, would avoid the "mistakes" of the West, and secondly, would come close to the ideals of the socialists (in whose person the West-European peoples have realised the inconvenience and invalidity of private ownership of the land). But Chernyshevsky says nothing about *this* logic of communal land tenure. In him this objective logic is replaced by the subjective logic of "progressive" Russian people who are familiar with West-European socialism (in its utopian form) and believe that Russia should make use of the experience of more advanced countries. Hegel would hardly have agreed to *such* an application of his views. This is to say nothing of the fact that in Hegel the third phase bears only a formal resemblance to the first, whereas Chernyshevsky almost equates socialist society—as it was pictured by the utopian socialists—with the Russian village (commune) which incidentally is very far removed from the really primitive form of landownership.

"There is no abstract truth; truth is concrete.... Everything depends upon the circumstances of time and place," said the self-same Chernyshevsky in another article, expounding Hegel. In defending communal land tenure by reference to Hegel, he should have recalled *this aspect* of Hegel's views, first and foremost. Then he would have reasoned differently. Is communal land tenure a good or bad thing? It is impossible to give a definite answer to this. One must know what its present position is and what position the likely future is preparing for it. "There is no abstract truth; truth is concrete" ... but Chernyshevsky wished to find abstract truth and he went against the spirit of the very philosophy which he was quoting.

The extent to which Chernyshevsky did not notice the invalidity of his abstract point of view on the commune is shown by the following interesting fact. The article, the arguments of which we have just expounded, is preceded by an introduction in which our author expresses the cheerless view on the future of Russian peasant landownership, with which the reader is already familiar, and "*his shame*" that he had thoughtlessly gone to the defence of the commune. At first glance this seems completely incomprehensible: on the one hand, the man is saying that he has become "reckless", even more—"I have become stupid in my own eyes" because he defended the commune, and on the other, he is again



defending it, and defending it with what he regards as an invincible weapon. What does this mean? It means that in one case Chernyshevsky is speaking of the *real* Russian commune which is in a definite historical position. The cause of this commune seems to him to be completely lost. But, as a *utopian*, he does not reckon with *real* social relations only, he also does not forget the *possible* relations which play such a large part in the world outlook of all utopians. From the point of view of these possible relations the commune remains a splendid thing, and to defend it is not only not shameful, but on the contrary, very good. Thus, the possible is a sphere which is completely independent of reality. This logical error was repeated constantly later by all the Russian Narodniks, up to and including G. I. Uspensky. However, Chernyshevsky's view on communal land tenure was very different from the Narodnik view.

[*Manuscript continuation of page 160*]\*

The revolutionary mood of Polish society coincided with the intense excitement of opposition elements in Russia. The students were in a state of ferment, secret societies sprang up which printed proclamations and awaited a general uprising of the peasants who were dissatisfied with the conditions of their "emancipation". All these "disorders" had a direct influence on Chernyshevsky's fate.

"At that time," says the late Shelgunov in his memoirs, "proclamations were distributed with great audacity and fairly openly. One would meet acquaintances with bulging pockets, and in reply to the question 'what have you got there?' came the perfectly calm reply 'proclamations', as if they were some legal and even approved printed publication. Or the bell rang. You would open the door and see an acquaintance who, without a single word, or even pretending that he did not recognise you, would thrust a bundle of proclamations into your hand and retire hastily with the same incognito. Proclamations were left on seats in theatres, stuck like posters on the walls of concert halls, even stuffed into pockets, so they say, and concerning the proclamation *To the Younger Generation*" the story goes that a certain gentleman trotted along the Nevsky on a white horse, tossing it right and left. Finally, proclamations were sent by post. The proclamation *To All Officers*"<sup>78</sup> was circulated with particular audacity. It was distributed during Christ's matins\*\* and even handed out

\* [See p. 141 of this volume, and German edition, p. 105. The beginning of Chapter X (VIII).]

\*\* That is, during matins on Easter Sunday. The most remarkable of all the appeals of that time was the leaflet "*Young Russia*",<sup>79</sup> which invited the student youth ("our main hope") to prepare for "a bloody and inexorable revo-

in the churches, so they said." Shelgunov notes that in terms of importance all these proclamations "were simply an act of courage and produced the impression of banging petards". This is quite right. The working population of St. Petersburg probably understood nothing in the proclamation "To the Younger Generation" which was scattered about the streets and the proclamation "Young Russia". But the very courage of the distributors of the proclamations forced the government to assume that they were backed by a large revolutionary force. This provided a good excuse for taking those "intimidatory measures" with the help of which the Russian government usually directs its opponents to the true path. Arrests began. The day after the distribution of the proclamation "To the Younger Generation" (this was in autumn 1861) one of the most eminent contributors to the *Sovremennik*, M. I. Mikhailov, was arrested. This event caused a great stir in the literary world of St. Petersburg. Two or three days later nearly all the literary people of St. Petersburg gathered at the home of the publisher of the journal *Russkoye Slovo*,<sup>80</sup> Count Kushelev, in order to discuss what they could do to help the arrested man. It was decided to send a petition to the Minister of Public Education (the press then came under his jurisdiction) requesting him to concern himself with Mikhailov's fate. The Minister (the above-mentioned Admiral Putyatin) received the petition, although he remarked to the delegates who brought it that there was no literary "estate" in Russia. For his part the liberal Alexander II ordered the delegates to be locked in the guardhouse.\* In the meantime Mikhailov was imprisoned in the fortress and amazed the investigators who were interrogating him with the harshness and truthfulness of his answers. He admitted to being the author of one of the proclamations and announced that he hated the existing order in Russia with all his heart and looked forward to the day when the tsarist government would be overthrown. The Senate sentenced him to 15 years penal servitude in the mines (the harshest type of penal servitude). The tsar reduced the sentence to 7 years. This

lution" with the cry of "long live the social and democratic Russian republic". The leaflet pronounced the death sentence both on the tsar's family and on the whole "imperial party". The liberal constitutionalists are chided in it in a most hostile fashion. As an example for Russian revolutionaries the author of the leaflet names the great French terrorists of the last century. The revolutionary party should take political power into its hands in order "with its help to introduce different foundations of economic and social life in the quickest possible time". Herzen rightly remarked in his *Kolokol* in connection with "Young Russia" that "a call to arms can be made only on the eve of battle" and that "any premature call is a hint, a word given to the enemy and the exposure of one's weakness to him". But the point was that the Russian revolutionaries of that time thought they were already "on the eve of battle". They did not understand that there could be no talk of revolution as long as the student youth were the revolutionaries' "main hope".

\* Incidentally, he later "forgave" them.

was very grossmütig,\* but at the same time it did not interfere with the achievement of the aim: the removal of one of the main "ringleaders" of the revolutionary movement. It was now the turn of the *main* "ringleader", Chernyshevsky.

The student disturbances of 1861, long remembered by all St. Petersburg, were caused by the fact that even in the honeymoon of its liberalism the government of Alexander II could not, as already mentioned, endure even the remotest hint of academic freedom. In 1856 Prince G. A. Shcherbatov, something of a liberal, was appointed guardian of the St. Petersburg educational area. He allowed the students to have a benefit fund, a library, and a reading room, and to publish their own "collection". For the management of all these branches of student life meetings were held to elect representatives. The students began to lead a corporative life. It was this fact that displeased the government. In 1860 Prince Shcherbatov was forced to retire and the Caucasian General Filippson was appointed in his place. The students were "*taken in hand*". Student meetings were banned, as were the public lectures given by professors to raise money for the student benefit fund, the fund itself and the library which belonged to the students were closed down. An end was put to the students' corporative life, and at the same time measures were taken to restrict the influx of pupils into the university (at that time there were 1,500 of them at St. Petersburg University; in the final years of Nicholas' reign only 300): the University Council was no longer able to exempt students from payment for attending lectures. Such were the new university statutes drawn up by the "enlightened seafarer", Minister of Public Education *Admiral* Putyatin. The best professors of St. Petersburg University hastily handed in their resignation, and the students, in spite of the ban, began to assemble at noisy meetings. There was even a demonstration of students who went to have it out with the guardian Filippson. True to his military memories Filippson turned to *armed force*. A street clash of students and soldiers took place, the university was closed temporarily, and so many students were arrested that there was not enough room for them in the SS Peter and Paul Fortress and they were taken away on boats to Kronstadt.

All this took place in 1861, and in the spring of the following year in St. Petersburg a series of fires began, which the government blamed on the "nihilists". The reactionary press began to proclaim the need for strict measures and denounced Chernyshevsky and those who supported his views in the most unambiguous fashion.

For his part, Chernyshevsky gave his articles an increasingly revolutionary character. He, who at one time had found it

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\* [magnanimous]

(possible and useful to explain to the government its own interest in the matter of freeing the peasants, no longer even thinks of addressing himself to the government).

[*Manuscript continuation of page 168*]\*

The plot of the novel *What Is To Be Done?* is very simple. A student of the St. Petersburg Medico-surgical Academy, Lopukhov, meets a young girl of modest means, Vera Pavlovna Rozalskaya, whose parents want to marry her against her will to a shallow and debauched, but very rich officer. In order to get her out of this difficult position, Lopukhov suggests that she should secretly conclude a *fictitious* marriage alliance with him. Vera Pavlovna agrees and thus escapes from the painful guardianship of her parents. For a while she remains Lopukhov's fictitious wife only, but then falls in love with him, and he becomes her husband in more than name. The Lopukhovs are very happy. They lead the rational life of the "*new people*" surrounded by rational and honest friends. But Vera Pavlovna is dissatisfied with this life. She wants to embark upon the practical implementation of the socialist ideas about which she has thought so much and talked so often with her friends. She and her friends regard the organisation of workers' production associations as the best way of implementing these ideas. So she takes the initiative in organising the St. Petersburg seamstresses. This undertaking—which is expounded by Chernyshevsky, as was his wont, with a whole series of the most detailed estimates showing the advantages of the new principle—develops rapidly. Vera Pavlovna can now call herself a completely happy person. But a painful drama awaits her. Among the Lopukhovs' friends there was a young, highly promising professor of physiology by the name of Kirsanov. Vera Pavlovna realises with horror that she is in love with Kirsanov, who in his turn, discovers quite unexpectedly for himself that he loves Vera Pavlovna. Both of them fight hard against their feelings. But their feelings do not yield to their efforts: Lopukhov notices it and decides that for the happiness of his friend and his beloved he should retire. He disappears; the police and almost all his friends are convinced that he has drowned himself in the Neva. Vera Pavlovna is free in the eyes of the law. Now nothing prevents her from marrying Kirsanov. And she does so, after learning that Lopukhov is alive and in America. When the latter sees that he has succeeded in overcoming his feeling for Vera Pavlovna, he returns to St. Petersburg and marries a friend of the Kirsanovs. His new wife also engages in the organisation of sewing workshops.

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\* [See p. 149 of this volume, and German edition, p. 115. The beginning of Chapter XII (X).]

Both families, the Lopukhovs and the Kirsanovs, live in the greatest of friendship.

As the reader can see, almost each of the main characters in the novel behaves in such a way that the "protectors" have every right to complain about the shaking of the sacred "foundations" of the family, the insult to morality, the profanation of the law, etc. And the "protectors" did complain about it and still do to the present day. At the same time they claim that the novel is void of all artistic merit, that Chernyshevsky revealed a complete lack of artistic talent in it. This second accusation is true in part only: the comic characters in the novel *What Is To Be Done?* (for example, Vera Pavlovna's parents) are well drawn and full of life, but the true heroes of the novel, Vera Pavlovna and her friends, are indeed unsuccessful from the artistic point of view. But what of it? Let them show us (any fine, truly artistic work of Russian literature which could vie with the novel *What Is To Be Done?* in its influence on the moral and intellectual development of the country).

[*Manuscript continuation of page 172*]\*

In their ideas of socialist society our revolutionaries frequently went so far as to conceive it in the form of a federation of peasant communes, cultivating their fields with the same antiquated plough as that used to scrape the soil in the time of Basil the Blind.)

On the other hand, there can be no doubt that the view on the practical way of implementing socialist ideas, expressed by Chernyshevsky in his famous novel, must be regarded as backward even for its time. The historical fact that associations were advocated simultaneously in both Russia and Germany is most interesting. Chernyshevsky's novel appeared in 1863. Also in 1863 Lassalle recommended production associations to German workers as the only means of improving their life to any degree. But what a difference in the way this question was raised in Russia and in Germany! In Chernyshevsky's novel it is humane and educated individuals [who concern themselves with] the setting up of associations: Vera Pavlovna and her friends. Even the "enlightened" priest Mertsalov is enlisted to the cause, who, to quote his own expression, plays the role of a *shield* in the workshops set up by Vera Pavlovna. Not a word is said in the novel about the independent political activity of the working class. Nor did the Russian "people of the sixties", who attempted to implement the programme proposed by Chernyshevsky, say a word about it either. Whereas the first word in Lassalle's agitation was to

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\* [See p. 153 of this volume.]

point out to the workers the need for political action by them. In Lassalle's project the setting up of associations has a broad nation-wide character. For Chernyshevsky it remains the affair of private individuals. Lassalle would have taken Chernyshevsky for a follower of Schulze-Delitzsch. The difference between the practical plans of Lassalle, on the one hand, and Chernyshevsky, on the other, shows perfectly how great a difference there was between Germany and Russia in internal relations. By this we do not wish to say, of course, that Lassalle's plans, like the older plans of Louis Blanc, were not a utopia.

In the novel *What Is To Be Done?*, contrary to Chernyshevsky's custom, a great deal is said about love, which is supposed to redeem mankind. Here one sees clearly the influence of *Feuerbach*.

# N. G. CHERNYSHEVSKY

[1909]<sup>81</sup>

## INTRODUCTION

We shall not discuss here the importance in the history of our society of that great "epoch of the sixties" to which the finest time in the life and literary activity of N. G. Chernyshevsky belongs: it is to be hoped that this importance is now known to all and sundry. Nor do we intend to write a biography of our author. True, much valuable material for such a biography is now to be found in the press. But the processing of this valuable material should, of course, be undertaken by someone with access to even more valuable material, i.e., to the family archive of the Chernyshevskys. In so saying, we have in mind Mr. Yevg. Lyatsky, who has already printed the extremely interesting article "N. G. Chernyshevsky in His School Years and on the Way to University" (*Sovremennyy Mir*, May and June 1908). It is to be hoped that Mr. Lyatsky will continue his work and gradually describe the whole life of this great representative of the epoch of the sixties. Our work had already been printed, when the continuation of Mr. Lyatsky's interesting article, relating to N. G. Chernyshevsky's university years, appeared in the *Sovremennyy Mir*. For our part, we shall confine ourselves here to a few, undoubtedly essential facts.

Nikolai Gavrilovich was the son of a priest. His forbears, who from time immemorial had also belonged to the clergy, originated "from the Great Russians of Chembarsk Okrug, Penza Gubernia", i.e.—we would mention in passing—from the same area as V. G. Belinsky. But he himself was born (on July 12, 1828) in Saratov, where his father was then senior priest in the Church of St. Sergius. Mr. Yevg. Lyatsky rightly says that in the history of Nikolai Gavrilovich's childhood and youth the following interesting fact cannot fail to attract attention: "All the conditions among which this remarkable and original person developed arose so naturally and formed such a complete set of ideas of a definite intellectual and moral culture that the family atmosphere of the Chernyshevskys can, without exaggeration, be-

called unusually beneficial for the development in the boy of independent thought and a strong will capable of controlling healthy and normal feelings. All the best that old Russian life of the last century could give seems to have combined in this family in order to save the future writer from the sombre aspects of Russian reality, the struggle with which claimed so many ardent lives."\* One reservation only must be made here: no family, however good its domestic relations, can protect a child from the sombre aspects which are characteristic of the society surrounding this family. And Mr. Yevg. Lyatsky himself admits this. "Amid the pursuits and games of the adolescent Nikolai," he says, "the sombre aspects of life around him, which were greatly alleviated by environment and parental care, could not escape his keen mind."\*\* And he quotes lines from Pypin's memoirs which give a most clear idea of the aspects of the life of that day which could have made the strongest impression on the gifted child. They were "sombre pictures of violence, cruelty and the repression of personal and human dignity".\*\*\* But, if this is so, Mr. Yevg. Lyatsky is bound to agree that Nikolai Gavrilovich's observations already as a child and a youth must have given him considerable material for the very conclusions, on the basis of which the moods that claimed "so many ardent lives" usually arose. In this respect there was no contrast between the childhood and youth of Chernyshevsky, on the one hand, and the mature period of his life, on the other. The only indubitable fact is that the happy family environment gave the young Chernyshevsky the opportunity to build up a reserve of spiritual and even purely physical strength which the "young lives" who joined battle with harsh reality very rarely possessed.

As for external impressions, their constant flow was ensured by the simple fact that Nikolai Gavrilovich received an upbringing which was rather—not to say extremely—democratic. In clerical circles his family was considered very prosperous, and we shall see in a moment that this relative prosperity considerably intimidated the poor among the Saratov clergy. But how modest the degree of prosperity of Nikolai Gavrilovich's parents was in fact and how democratic, in consequence of its modesty, was his upbringing, are shown by his own words: "We had very, very little money," he wrote to Y. P. Pypina in a letter of February 25, 1878. "In St. Petersburg the poorest of the people you have seen—even beggars—do not know now what a ten-kopeck piece was in our—not poor—family. It was not poor. There was plenty of food. And clothing. But there was never any money! Therefore our

\* See the above-mentioned article by Mr. Yevg. Lyatsky, *Sovr. Mtr.* 1908, May, pp. 45-46.

\*\* Ibid., p. 57.

\*\*\* Ibid., same page.



elders could not dream of such things as governesses and the like. We did not even have nannies. There were many servants. But they were all engaged in domestic chores. They looked after the children only at odd moments, few and far-between, as a rest from work, and that was all.— But what about our elders? Both fathers\* wrote their official papers from morning to night. They did not even have time to go visiting. Our mothers worked from morning to night. When they were worn out, they would take a rest and read books. They wanted to be, and were, our nannies. But they had to sew for their husbands and children, look after the household, and concern themselves with all the worries of moneyless households.

"And so, at odd moments, we had nannies—who read, and we occasionally listened; but mostly we read ourselves. No one 'encouraged' us. But we became fond of reading.

"Apart from this we did as the fancy took us. There was constant advice so that we should not bruise our foreheads. At the slightest adventure of this kind adults came running to our aid—either our elders, or the servants. But there could not be any great disasters. We had no dangerous playthings: nothing made of iron, nothing sharp. This was because we had no bought toys at all. We had no money for toys. We had nothing with which to hurt ourselves. And our elders were quiet people; there was no noise or disorder even among the servants: all the servants—the serfs of your husband's mother—were truly noble people. So we, too, growing up in an honest and modest society, developed modest, sensible habits in our games. Thus, there was no danger for us from our amusements. And we grew up, in fact, as adults spend their time, that is: did all that we pleased."\*\*

And what "pleased" the children? Above all to exercise their physical powers, to play and frolic. F. V. Dukhovnikov in his article on Chernyshevsky's life in Saratov says that in childhood Nikolai Gavrilovich played games with great enthusiasm and passion. This can also be seen from the reminiscences of V. D. Chesnokov, who was his playmate. But in the latter's reminiscences of Nikolai Gavrilovich's games in childhood and youth another feature emerges which is worthy of note.

"Having read a great deal about the life of the Greeks and Romans," he says, "Nikolai Gavrilovich realised even during childhood (at the age of 14) the importance of gymnastical exercises for strengthening the body (about which he repeatedly told his playmates) and engaged in them, although without the knowledge of his parents, who would probably have forbidden such pastimes.

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\* Nikolai Gavrilovich is referring here, apart from his own father, to the father of A. N. Pypin, whose family lived next to the Chernyshevsky family.

\*\* *Sovremenny Mir*, May 1908, pp. 70-71.

In his own backyard, together with some other boys, he dug a pit over which they would jump for prizes. Those who jumped over the pit received a prize: apples, nuts, money and so on. Nikolai Gavrilovich usually jumped over the pit, but, as the eldest of us, he himself did not take prizes, leaving them for the other boys, or else he would share them with us. Our other gymnastical exercises were: jumping over various objects, climbing up a post, up trees, throwing stones from a sling, chasing one another, running races, etc."\*

Who knows how N. G. Chernyshevsky's body would have coped with the unsalutary conditions which surrounded him in the second half of his life, had he not been hardened since childhood by this democratic simplicity of upbringing and these gymnastical exercises modelled on the "Greeks and Romans"?

From the moral point of view the freedom to do everything "he pleased" was good in that it gave the child a full opportunity to look directly at life, without being cut off from it by a Chinese wall of all manner of conventions. And it is obvious from everything that even in his early youth Chernyshevsky was able to look at the life around him with keen eyes. In the first part of the novel *Prologue*, which is undoubtedly of autobiographical significance, he speaks thus of the relationship of his hero Volgin to the "aristocracy": "He never belonged even to the lower ranks of the nobility, to say nothing of the higher, important one. But which town, large or small, did not ring with the glory of their great deeds? He knew from childhood that they were violent, arrogant people."\*\*

And it was not the "aristocracy" alone that Volgin (Chernyshevsky) observed in his childhood. He also observed the so-called common people.

"He remembered a crowd of drunken barge haulers walking along the street of his native town: noise, shouting, daring songs, robbers' songs. A stranger would have thought: The town is in danger—another moment and they will loot the shops and houses, and smash everything to smithereens. The door of a watchman's hut opens slightly and out peeps a sleepy old face with a grey, straggling moustache, a toothless mouth opens and shouts or rather moans in a senile wheeze: 'What's all the noise about, you swine? I'll give you what for!' The bold gang falls silent, each of them trying to hide behind the other; another shout like that and the bold lads who called themselves 'not thieves, nor robbers, but Stenka Razin's men' and boasted that when they raised their

\* К. М. Федоров, «Жизнь русских великих людей. Н. Г. Чернышевский», Асхабад, 1904 г., стр. 5—6. [K. M. Fyodorov, *The Life of Great Russians. N. G. Chernyshevsky*, Askhabad, 1904, pp. 5-6.]

\*\* N. G. Chernyshevsky, *Collected Works*, Vol. X, Part 1, Section 2, p. 171.

fists 'Moscow trembled' would take to their heels, they would run for their lives if the cripple shouted once more through the door of the hut; but the old watchman knows it would be a sin to frighten the lads too badly: they would bang their heads and break their legs and be crippled for life, poor things—so the watchman takes a pinch of snuff and says: 'Go with God, lads, but don't wake me up, don't needle me.' The hut door closes, and the gang of bold lads, Stenka Razin's former men, walk off quietly, whispering to one another that, luckily for them, the watchman seemed to be a good man."\*

Chernyshevsky says that such scenes used to bewilder Volgin in childhood.

In view of the autobiographical nature of the novel *Prologue* (i.e., of part one, *Prologue to a Prologue*), it can be said that Chernyshevsky's childhood impressions already suggested to him ideas which produced not only humorous scenes of the type quoted. And even these humorous scenes could not fail to have a profound influence on the adult Chernyshevsky's view of the "common people", about which we shall speak frequently below. For the present, however, we would merely note that only a child whose upbringing had not prevented him from coming close to reality and reflecting on its phenomena could observe such scenes from everyday life and be bewildered by them.\*\*

But for all the democratic nature of N. G. Chernyshevsky's upbringing, it contained an element of peculiar aristocratism which is worthy of our full attention. In order to understand the significance of this element, one must take into account, for example, the following testimony of N. G. Chernyshevsky:

"Now, as I hear, in many, perhaps in all, seminaries heavy drinking has been reduced or completely abolished. But in my time at the Saratov Seminary no meeting of seminarists could help being a drinking-bout. Nikolai Alexandrovich\*\*\* was so much younger than his fellow students, that he would have been unsuited to participate in the drinking, even if his family life had not restrained him from such a propensity."\*\*\*\*

And further: "When I moved to rhetoric, of my 122 fellow students only four were fourteen and only one was thirteen and we regarded him as a child. This youth drank very heavily and got up to all manner of youthful pranks with remarkable zeal."\*\*\*\*\*

\* Ibid., same page.

\*\* Mr. Yevg. Lyatsky says: "It was in Saratov—and this was during his childhood and youth—that he acquired the profound understanding of the people's needs and aspirations which he later revealed in his articles on the peasant question" (*Sovr. Mir*, 1908, May, p. 57). We regard this as perfectly correct.

\*\*\* A reference to Dobrolyubov.

\*\*\*\* N. G. Chernyshevsky, *Works*, Vol. IX, pp. 10-11.

\*\*\*\*\* Ibid., p. 11.

As you see, drinking was very tempting for the seminarist of that day: it was a way of getting a reputation of being a fine fellow among his mates. But, as far as we know, Chernyshevsky never succumbed to this temptation. Why not? Leaving aside other possible explanations, we would remind the reader that Chernyshevsky himself says of Dobrolyubov: "Because of his youth Dobrolyubov would have been unsuited to take part in seminary drinking-bouts even if his family life had not restrained him from them." These words show that, in Chernyshevsky's opinion, family life restrained young people from a propensity for heavy drinking. But there are families and families. For family life to protect young people from the influence of bad examples, it must not provide such examples itself. And in this respect Chernyshevsky's family was a good one. Nikolai Gavrilovich's father was, of course, a person of the old school, but he was always sober, industrious and serious. This was extremely fortunate for the boy. But that is not all. Given closer contact with his fellow seminarists N. G. Chernyshevsky might nevertheless have been infected by their drunken "bravado", if what we have called the element of "aristocratism" in his position had not prevented this. His contact with his fellow seminarists could not go beyond certain limits, thanks to the relative prosperity of his family. N. G. Chernyshevsky himself admits the great significance of this element, in speaking of Dobrolyubov's life. And it is interesting that he explains this significance using himself as an example.

"Nikolai Alexandrovich," he says, "was the son of an urban priest who enjoyed the esteem of his superiors in the diocese. In order that people unfamiliar with seminary life may understand this, I shall say a word about my own relations with my fellow seminarists. My father was also a priest in a gubernia town in a rich (!) parish (my father's income from service offerings extended to 1,500 rubles in banknotes, and we lived comfortably). I was on good terms with all my fellow seminarists; about ten of them were my close friends. How often we roughed one another up in a friendly wrestle—countless times; in a word, in the classroom and at the seminary (where I went nearly every day for a friendly chat) as few of the students stood on ceremony with me as with anyone else. But only two or three of them visited me at home, and rarely at that; and it must be said that these were by no means some of my closest friends: they were no more than acquaintances; but they were not ashamed to visit me in my family, because they had decent clothing and footwear. Nothing can compare with the poverty of the great majority of seminarists. I remember that in my time only one of the 600 students in the seminary had a wolf-skin coat—and this unusual coat seemed somehow unfitting for a seminary pupil, as if a peasant had put

on a diamond ring. I remember that the late Misha Levitsky, who had no other clothes apart from a blue homespun coat for winter and a yellow nankeen jacket for summer—I remember that this greatest friend of mine dared not visit me when I was sick with fever and did not leave the house for three weeks; and yet Levitsky and I could not go for two days without seeing each other, and when he did not come to classes, I went to his home each day. In short, no matter how moderate the degree of my family's standing and wealth was, nearly all my friends would have considered visiting my home just as fantastic, and would have felt just as poor and insignificant in it, as I would have felt in the drawing room of the Duke of Devonshire.\*

Nikolai Gavrilovich's childhood and adolescence were such that he could observe unimpeded the highly unpleasant reality which surrounded him and at the same time was fortunate enough to have the possibility of not dirtying himself in its filth. This is not the lot of all.

The third fortunate circumstance of this period of his life was the fact that his father, a highly educated man, taught him right up to the seminary and thereby enabled him to avoid the "church school", in which the children, in accordance with the custom of the day, were subjected to "physical persuasion" by the venerable teachers for the slightest misdemeanour. He entered the seminary on September 1, 1844, in the rhetoric class. Here he made good progress in general. But he revealed a special talent, it would seem, in compositions on the subjects: "the passions should be curbed"; "the righteous man, like Mount Zion, will not be moved"; "God is leading us all to salvation", etc. The future critic and publicist of the *Sovremennik* developed these edifying subjects to the complete satisfaction of his philology teacher. "There is reason to hope," the latter found, "that the author will be a good master of his trade with time."\*\*

With the move into the philosophy class, the subjects on which the young "author" exercised himself became even more serious. Our young seminarist wrote a composition in which he argued that "the source of wisdom lies in fear of the Lord"; he also wrote "on the source and significance of the Old Testament offerings", "on the essence of the world", "on the gradual turning of primordial essence into phenomena", "on the expanse of the world", etc. But the most interesting point is that already in these exercises of his Nikolai Gavrilovich was confronted with a question which attracted his serious attention in his mature years and to which one of the articles written on his return from Siberia ("The Character of Human Knowledge", discussed below) is devoted:

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\* N. G. Chernyshevsky, *Collected Works*, Vol. IX, p. 10.

\*\* Yevg. Lyatsky, op. cit.: *Sovr. Mtr*, June 1908, p. 38.

the question "do our sense organs deceive us or not?" Here is what we read about this in Mr. Yevg. Lyatsky:

"Chernyshevsky disagreed with Eckartshausen who maintained that it is impossible to determine the correspondence of our ideas of objects to the objects themselves. Chernyshevsky considered Eckartshausen's evidence to be unconvincing. If we have no a posteriori, experimental evidence of the nature of the actual object of investigation, we can use a priori evidence. For what purpose in that case have we been given senses, if they only deceive us and, consequently, do not help, but harm us, by deluding us? 'In that case who would be the perpetrator of the deceit into which our senses plunged us? Without doubt, he who gave them to us. But it is quite impossible for God to be the perpetrator of falsehood and the cause of deceit. And if it is impossible for God to be the perpetrator of falsehood, then we must agree that he did not give us sense organs which are arranged so as to deceive us.' The teacher marked the essay: 'Very good.' Evidently the answer to the question satisfied the teacher's requirements completely, and excessive theorising was not allowed."\*

Later N. G. Chernyshevsky solved this question, of course, with the help of other arguments. But his final conclusion remained, in the last analysis, the same: he was always very scornful of theories which preached the incognisability of the external world.

However, he did not please the seminary authorities for long with his progress in the sciences. At the end of December 1845 he applied for permission to leave, and in May of the following year he was already travelling to St. Petersburg by horse-drawn carriage to enter the university. This was done with the full consent of his parents, who had their own mundane reasons for giving it.\*\* With regard to N. G. Chernyshevsky himself, we have only a few indirect indications of the reasons which prompted him to renounce a career in the church. These indications, however, are fairly clear. He wrote of himself: "Pyotr Nikiforovich Karakozov, the priest of the Alexandrov hospital church, was the first to wish me that which I desire with all my heart: speaking of my impending journey to St. Petersburg, he said: 'God grant that we shall meet again, come back to us from there a professor, a great man, and by then we shall have turned grey.'" To this Chernyshevsky added: "My heart was suddenly moved by this! How pleasant to see a person who, albeit accidentally, unintentionally, perhaps, nevertheless says what you yourself think, wishes you what you desire fervently and what hardly anyone would wish either himself or you, particularly at such an age

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\* Ibid., pp. 40-41.

\*\* Ibid., pp. 44-45.

as mine, and in such a position.”\* After meeting the deacon M. S. Protasov on the way to St. Petersburg, who said to him: “May you be of service to enlightenment and Russia”, the future student again writes: “I now have a duty: to be eternally grateful to him and Pyotr Nikiforovich for their wishes: these people can understand properly what it means to strive for renown and to serve mankind. Mamma said: that is too much, to serve his father and mother is enough; no, that is far too little; one must serve one’s whole homeland. I must remember them forever.”\*\* To this one can add that already in one of his seminary essays Chernyshevsky spoke out as an ardent supporter of “enlightenment”. This essay was written on the subject that the education of mankind depends on the education of the younger generation. According to Mr. Yevg. Lyatsky, who quotes this adolescent essay, “Chernyshevsky clearly and consistently established a connection between the tasks incumbent upon the younger generation and the wealth of cultural knowledge which this generation receives from the past.”\*\*\* He says there that “knowledge is an inexhaustible mine, the deeper it is worked the more riches it gives its owners”. But of special interest is the conclusion of this essay, in which the young author calls for tireless activity in the sphere of knowledge. “Just think!” he exclaims, “the course of the education of all mankind depends on our activity.”\*\*\*\* But at the time to which this work belongs, Chernyshevsky does not appear to have made a distinction between secular and so-called ecclesiastical education. Later his young mind perceived this difference very quickly, and he saw that a career in the church did not correspond to his views on things and his strivings.

In August 1846 he was admitted as a student of St. Petersburg University. We know little of his student years. There would seem to be no doubt that, as Mr. K. Fyodorov says: “During the university course Nikolai Gavrilovich studied classical languages, philology, Slavonic languages, attended the lectures of the well-known philosopher and archaeologist Izm. Iv. Sreznevsky and under his guidance compiled a glossary for the Hypatian\*\*\*\*\* chronicle. This glossary was printed in the *Supplements to the Proceedings of the Second Section of the Academy of Sciences* in 1853.”\*\*\*\*\* But all this is too vague. We do not know, for example, exactly when Chernyshevsky’s first literary experiments began. Volume I of his *Collected Works* begins with two bibliographical

\* Ibid., pp. 46-47.

\*\* Ibid., p. 47.

\*\*\* Ibid., p. 40.

\*\*\*\* Ibid., same page.

\*\*\*\*\* Mr. Fyodorov has a misprint here: there is “Ignatian” instead of “Hypatian”. The glossary is now reprinted in Part 2 of Volume X of N. G. Chernyshevsky’s *Collected Works*.

\*\*\*\*\* K. Fyodorov, *N. G. Chernyshevsky*, Askhabad, 1904, p. 11.

notes (on books by A. Hilferding and Neukirch) which were printed in the seventh issue of *Otechestvenniye Zapiski* for 1853. Hence one may conclude that the beginning of his literary activity belongs to the middle of that year. But in the same volume, in a lengthy bibliographical note on Starchevsky's *Reference Encyclopaedic Dictionary*, we read: "On the publication of the first volume of this *Dictionary* we presented (*Otech. Zap.*, 1847, No. 8) a detailed analysis of it, which showed that undertakings of this kind, in order to be of real use to the public, must be compiled in accordance with a strictly thought-out plan and executed with great accuracy, and that the *Reference Dictionary* satisfies neither of these conditions. The public, as far as we can judge, agreed with us entirely."\* What does this mean?

Two assumptions can be made here, and we shall examine each of them separately.

Firstly, one can assume—and this is, of course, the first assumption that comes to mind—that the literary activity of N. G. Chernyshevsky began in 1847 (*if not earlier*) and that, consequently, it is only due to an oversight by the publisher of his *Collected Works* that the note about the first volume of the dictionary in question was not included in this collection. There is nothing improbable in such an assumption: in 1847 Chernyshevsky was 19 years old, i.e., of an age when it is perfectly possible to write a serious bibliographical note. By accepting this assumption, we are inevitably confronted with two questions. Was the note in question really the first work of our author to appear in print? And is it possible that, after printing it in 1847, he printed nothing else right up to July 1853, when, as we know, his notes on the books of Hilferding and Neukirch appeared in the same journal? We cannot solve either of these questions: they could probably be solved only by M. N. Chernyshevsky or Mr. Yevg. Lyatsky.\*\*

The second possible assumption here is that the note on the *Reference Encyclopaedic Dictionary* printed in Volume I of

\* N. G. Chernyshevsky, *Collected Works*, Vol. I, p. 14.

\*\* During the investigation of his case, Chernyshevsky testified that already in July or August 1846 he took to the editorial office of *Otech. Zapiski* a translation of the feuilleton from *Journal des Débats*, and at the end of 1847 or the beginning of 1848 handed Nekrasov for publication in the *Souremennik* a novel (about the misfortunes of an orphan girl who was brought up in an institution and then fell into bad hands). This novel was not published (M. K. Лемке, «Дело Н. Г. Чернышевского», *Былое*, 1906 г., № 4, стр. 161, [M. K. Lemke, "The Case of N. G. Chernyshevsky", *Byloye*, 1906, No. 4, p. 161]). This is all that we know so far. But these few facts would seem to show that Chernyshevsky had no other literary dealings at that time either with Kravetsky (i.e., with *Otech. Zapiski*), or with Nekrasov (i.e., with the *Souremennik*), otherwise he would have mentioned them, whereas in his testimony he says only that he did not see the persons in question again until 1853.



N. G. Chernyshevsky's *Works* belongs not to him, but to another contributor to *Otechestvenniye Zapiski*, to whom in which case, of course, the review printed in 1847 of the first volume of the dictionary would also belong. There is nothing improbable in this assumption either. The reviews in *Otech. Zapiski* at that time were unsigned. True, the authorship of an article may be judged not only from the signature. Its content and language also usually provide an indication of authorship. But, guided by these latter indications, we find the second assumption more likely than the first.

We realise that it is difficult to judge the language of a budding writer, such as Chernyshevsky was in 1847: budding writers use a language which is not yet fully developed and therefore not characteristic of them. But the language of the review printed in 1847 seems to us to be fully developed. This in itself would not be of decisive importance either: no one who has read Dobrolyubov's first printed works is likely to say that they were written by a novice in literature. But the point is that Chernyshevsky, even in his fourth year at university, wrote in a language which was far less developed than that in which the review of interest to us was written. This is obvious if one reads his article on "Fonvizin's *Brigadier*",<sup>82</sup> first published in Part 2 of Volume X of his *Works*, but—as can be seen from the note with which it is prefaced by the publisher—belonging to the time when Chernyshevsky was in his fourth year at university. The language of this article is, undoubtedly, the language of a writer who is a far less "practised hand" than the one who wrote the note on the first volume of the *Reference Encyclopaedic Dictionary*.

The same must be said about the content of the latter: it reveals in the author a completeness of world outlook and a wealth of information which we do not see in the article on the *Brigadier*. This article was written by N. G. Chernyshevsky when he was in the fourth year, but the review of 1847, if it belonged to him, would have been written either at the end of the first year or immediately after he moved to the second year. We therefore think that the publisher of his works was mistaken in ascribing to him the note on pp. 14-25 of the first volume.

But this too, unfortunately, does not solve the question of when our author's first literary experiments began. In expectation of a solution to it, let us turn again to the article about the *Brigadier*. It is worthy of our considered attention.

Almost at the very beginning of it the young author makes the following, most interesting reservation:

"About the influence of Fonvizin on society I shall say nothing, because even if Fonvizin had any, it was too little. We must, incidentally, agree on what we call the influence of a literary work on society: if this means that on the appearance of a new work

people start talking about it, praising or criticising the author, then Fonvizin had it, and particularly with the *Brigadier*; he himself says in his *Confession* how much his *Brigadier* was talked about at court, how the grandees vied with one another in inviting him to read his comedy—but, to our mind, this cannot be called influence on society. It exists only when the ideas on which a work is based come into living contact with the real (intellectual, moral or practical, it makes no difference which, but it must be the real) life of society, so that, after reading the work, society begins to feel a little different from before, to feel that its view of things has become clearer or changed, to feel that an impetus has been given to its intellectual or moral life.”\*

These words express briefly the view of the task of literature, which was later developed in detail by N. G. Chernyshevsky and which was assimilated by N. A. Dobrolyubov also.\*\* Here one can already see the future author of the *Gogol Period of Russian Literature*; but this author has not yet developed the original style of exposition which was so characteristic of him later; he is just beginning to develop it. In the same way also his argumentation is by no means marked by the wealth of information which amazes the reader of his later works. It is clear straightaway that we have before us just a “trial of the pen”. But how interesting this “trial of the pen” is, is shown, apart from the extract just quoted by us, by the following lines:

“The requirement is that ‘the characters portrayed by the writer, particularly the writer of drama, must develop; if they remain static the author is to blame, and the work is void of artistic merit’—you hear this requirement constantly, and you hear constant criticism of this or that work for not satisfying it. But, to our mind, this requirement cannot be made a fixed law determining the artistic beauty of a literary work. The laws of artistry cannot contradict that which exists in real life, they cannot demand that reality is portrayed differently from what it is; as it is, so it should be reflected in artistic works. But in real life we often encounter such a shallow nature, such an uncomplicated character, that you can see right through the person at once, and see all of him, absolutely all, so that even if you were to live with him for twenty years you would see in him nothing apart from what was manifested in his very first word, his very first glance. How can such a person develop his character before you in an artistic work, when he does not develop it in real life?”\*\*\*

The ideas expressed here were the ideas of Belinsky, as they

\* N. G. Chernyshevsky, *Collected Works*, Vol. X, Part 2, p. 2.

\*\* On the question of the importance of satire, see, in particular, Dobrolyubov's article “Russian Satire in the Time of Catherine” (*Sovremennik*, 1859, No. 10), reprinted in Vol. I of his *Works*.

\*\*\* N. G. Chernyshevsky, *Collected Works*, Vol. X, Part 2, p. 7.

developed in the final period of his literary activity; the same attention to reality, the same conviction that the artist should portray reality as it is, without embellishments or omissions. In this respect the article on the *Brigadier* is of tremendous importance for N. G. Chernyshevsky's biographer. It shows that by the end of his university course our author had become a staunch follower of Belinsky, for whom he always felt an admiring respect subsequently.

But can one say that he was brought up on the works of Belinsky and his circle? That this was the source from which he derived his views? No, that would not be quite right. Chernyshevsky undoubtedly owed a great deal to Belinsky; and yet it must be acknowledged that he certainly did not owe everything to him.

Although in his writings Chernyshevsky touches upon the history of his intellectual development extremely rarely, one nevertheless finds in them a few passing remarks which throw a certain light upon it. Among these extremely rare remarks is a letter written by him after Dobrolyubov's death in response to an article by a certain Mr. Z...n and printed in the February issue of the *Sovremennik* for 1862. In his article Mr. Z...n said, inter alia, that the late Dobrolyubov had been a disciple of Chernyshevsky's and was very strongly influenced by him. Chernyshevsky denies this passionately, even very angrily, saying that Dobrolyubov had arrived at his views quite independently and was far superior to him both in intellectual powers and in literary talent. We do not need to determine now to what extent this modest statement corresponded to the truth. To be honest, we, for our part, doubt greatly that it did coincide with it. But this does not concern us here; all that interests us now in Chernyshevsky's letter is the following passage. After reminding Z...n that Dobrolyubov knew German and French and could therefore acquaint himself with the finest literary works of France and Germany in the original, Chernyshevsky says: "If, however, a gifted Russian in the decisive years of his development reads the books of our common great Western teachers, then books and articles written in Russian may please him, may delight him (as Dobrolyubov too was delighted then by certain things written in Russian), but under no circumstances can they serve as the most important source of the knowledge and concepts which he derives from reading. As for the influence of my articles on Dobrolyubov, such an influence could not have existed even in the insignificant degree which Belinsky's articles may have had. At that time I did not have an important influence in literature."\* In fact at the time to which Chernyshevsky is referring here, i.e.,

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\* "By Way of an Expression of Gratitude, a Letter to Mr. Z...n", *Works*, Vol. IX, p. 101.

in 1855-56, when his famous *Essays on the Gogol Period of Russian Literature* had already appeared in print, his influence was considerably stronger than he maintains. But, we repeat, this is of no concern to us here. For us now the only important point is that he also knew foreign languages and that he also read the books of "our common great Western teachers" in the decisive years of his development. One may assume therefore that he too could only be delighted by certain articles and books written in Russian, among which pride of place belonged to the works of Belinsky, but that for him too they were not the "original source of his concepts and knowledge".

What was that source? The article on "Fonvizin's *Brigadier*" gives certain indications of this also. Its young author says:

"You cannot read *La Petite Fadette*, *François le Champi* and other novels of this kind by the greatest writer of our time without a feeling of pleasure: how you relax in this splendid, pure sphere! You would be glad to call each of these peasants your friend, you would live for years in their company without feeling bored, and it would never once occur to you, I think, that you were superior to them in intellect and education, even if you were actually far superior to them; but at the same time is it not true that all of them (apart from *Fadette* herself) are narrow-minded people and for the most part very, very narrow-minded indeed?"\*

This highly interesting passage shows that Chernyshevsky read avidly the novels by George Sand dealing with peasant life which were at that time a literary novelty.\*\* He gave George Sand pride of place among the writers of his day. But he read and studied not only French writers, of course. The remarks about seventeenth-century French literature which one finds in the same article show that by then he was strongly influenced by Lessing, to whom he later devoted a whole work.\*\*\* It should be noted, incidentally, that these remarks are very biassed and that if they are to be explained by the influence of Lessing, it is only with the reservation that the young Russian pupil in his enthusiasm exaggerated the ideas of his German teacher excessively.\*\*\*\*

Passing over Schiller and Goethe, whose works Chernyshevsky

\* *Works*, Vol. X, Part 2, p. 13.

\*\* The novel *La Petite Fadette* appeared in 1848, and *François le Champi* in 1850.

\*\*\* «Лессинг, его время, его жизнь и деятельность» [*Lessing, His Age, His Life and His Work*] (*Sovremennik*, 1856, Nos. 10-12; 1857, Nos. 1, 3-6. See *Collected Works*, Vol. III).

\*\*\*\* See, for example (*ibid.*, p. 15), his extremely contemptuous remarks about seventeenth-century French comedy and its "still famous representative" Molière, "in all of whose works one can hardly find two consecutive pages of natural conversation; everything is so artificial and exaggerated to make it sound more amusing and to make the characters stand out 'more sharply'."

first read, probably, while he was still at the seminary, he appears to have begun studying the classics of German philosophy, particularly Hegel, in the same pre-university period. But, to quote his own words, at that time he knew only "Russian expositions of Hegel's system, which are very incomplete". Also from his own words it is clear that these incomplete expositions "expounded the system of the great German idealist from the standpoint of the Left wing of the Hegelian school".\* (Were they perhaps A. I. Herzen's *Letters Concerning the Study of Nature*?) Further, we know, again on the basis of Chernyshevsky's own testimony, that after Hegel—whom he began to study in German when he moved to St. Petersburg and whom he liked less in the original than in the Russian expositions—he "accidentally" came across one of the principal works of Ludwig Feuerbach. The author of *The Essence of Christianity*\*\* had a decisive influence upon him. Chernyshevsky himself says that he "became a follower of that thinker" and zealously read and reread his works.

His acquaintance with Feuerbach began, as he himself says, about six years before the mundane necessity arose for him to write a scientific treatise, i.e., in other words, before he embarked upon his master's dissertation on aesthetics. And since he wrote this dissertation in 1853,\*\*\* his acquaintance with Feuerbach must have begun almost in his second year at university. In any case, he remained a follower of Feuerbach to the end of his life, and we would take the liberty of drawing Mr. K. Fyodorov's attention to the fact that the influence of that thinker on the philosophical views of our great writer was incomparably stronger than the influence of "the well-known philosopher Izm. Iv. Sreznevsky" (see above).

Feuerbach provided the philosophical basis of the whole world outlook of N. G. Chernyshevsky. But we already know that our author admired the novels of George Sand. These novels touched upon many themes relating directly to social and family life. And we shall hardly be wrong in assuming that while he was at university Chernyshevsky was already studying these themes a great deal. It is more than likely that this was also the time when he became acquainted with the most important socialist systems and began to study political economy.\*\*\*\* So far we possess

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\* See the preface to the third edition of "The Aesthetic Relation of Art to Reality" printed in Part 2, Vol. X of the *Collected Works*. For more about this interesting preface see below, in the chapter "N. G. Chernyshevsky's Philosophical Views".

\*\* [*Das Wesen des Christentums*.]

\*\*\* See the publisher's note on p. 84, Part 2, Vol. X of N. G. Chernyshevsky's *Collected Works*.

\*\*\*\* Already in 1854 his very good note on Lvov's book «О земле, как элементе богатства» [*On the Earth as an Element of Wealth*] appeared in the *Sovremennik* (No. 6).

no direct indications of how his studies of this kind progressed. One thing can be said with almost complete certainty. Although, on the eve of his departure for St. Petersburg, he had been delighted by the words of the priest Karakozov, who expressed the hope that he would become a man of learning, at a more mature age he no longer had any intention of becoming an academic specialist. The activity of the literary critic and publicist attracted him. In the seminary he had already decided to devote his powers to working for the good of his country. And, perhaps, already at that time he believed that this work should assume not so much an academic, as a publicistic character. In the *Essays on the Gogol Period*, he expresses himself most definitely on this subject.

"Many of the greatest scholars, poets and artists," he says there, "had in mind the service of pure science or pure art, and not any exceptional requirements of their homeland. Bacon, Descartes, Galileo, Leibnitz, Newton, and today Humboldt and Liebig, Cuvier and Faraday worked and work, thinking of the benefit to science in general and not of what is necessary at a given time for the welfare of the particular country which is their homeland. We do not know and do not ask ourselves whether they loved their country: so far removed is their fame from any connection with patriotic services. As members of the intellectual world, they are cosmopolitans. The same must be said of the many great poets of Western Europe. Let us take the greatest of them as an example—Shakespeare.... Let us name Ariosto, Corneille, Goethe. It is of artistic services to art, and not of special, prime endeavours to act for the good of their country, that their names remind us."\* Not so in our country. The Russian members of the intellectual world are, according to Chernyshevsky, in a completely different position. They cannot yet be cosmopolitans, i.e., cannot think of the interests of pure science or pure art. In this respect, in keeping with the conditions of their country, they have to be "patriots", i.e., to think first and foremost about the special needs of their homeland. In this respect the ideal "patriot" for Chernyshevsky is Peter the Great, the man who set himself the aim of bringing Russia all the blessings of European civilisation. Chernyshevsky thought that even in his own time this aim was still far from being fully achieved. "Up till now for a Russian the only possible service to the noble ideas of truth, art, and science is to promote their dissemination in his homeland. With time we too, like other peoples, will have thinkers and artists who act purely in the interests of science or art; but until our education is on a level with that of the most progressive nations, each of us has another cause dearer to his heart—the promotion, as far as possible,

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\* N. G. Chernyshevsky, *Collected Works*, Vol. II, pp. 120-21.

of the further development of that which was begun by Peter the Great. This cause demands today and will probably demand for a long time to come all the intellectual and moral forces which the most gifted sons of our homeland possess."\* It was to the dissemination in his homeland of the noble ideas of truth, art, and science that Chernyshevsky wished to devote his powers. And everything indicates that this intention was formed far earlier than his embarkation on a literary career. In all probability, it took final shape in the university years.

Subsequently, when he was in prison on a charge of propagating socialist doctrines, Chernyshevsky wrote:

"I am not a socialist in the serious, academic sense of the word, for a very simple reason: I am no lover of defending old theories against new ones. Whatever I am, I try to understand the present state of society and the convictions proceeding from it. The division of people engaged in political economy into socialist and non-socialist schools is a fact in the historical development of the science which has become obsolete. The practical application of this inner division of the science has also become a thing of the past: for a long time in England, and since the events of 1848 on the continent of Western Europe. I know there are many old-fashioned people who believe that this opinion of mine is open to dispute; but this is a dispute about whether or not my academic beliefs are well founded, a subject of no juridical importance. And yet it has been brought into the case."\*\*

No kind of morality could demand from N. G. Chernyshevsky that he reveal his innermost thoughts to his accusers. Consequently all the testimony of this kind provided by him can serve as material for his biography only if the biographer adopts a properly critical attitude towards it. In the case in question the critic should explain the meaning of the statement: "I am not a socialist in the serious, academic sense of the word." In fact it means that, in Chernyshevsky's opinion, the well-known old counterposing of socialism and political economy had become quite obsolete. And this opinion, in its turn, means that socialism not only should not fight against political economy but, quite the reverse, should substantiate its demands with the latter's basic tenets. In keeping with this belief of his, Chernyshevsky embarked upon the translation and commentary of J. S. Mill's *Principles of Political Economy*. And when he was accused of disseminating socialist doctrines, he referred to this fact as an argument in his defence. This is very clear from another passage of the document quoted by us.

"In the juridical sense of the word," N. G. Chernyshevsky says here, "in the serious, academic sense, which alone has juridical

\* Ibid., pp. 121-22.

\*\* M. K. Lemke, "The Case of N. G. Chernyshevsky" (*Byloye*, 1906, No. 5, p. 102).

importance, the term 'socialist' contradicts the facts of my activity. The most extensive of my works on political economy was the translation of the treatise by Mill, a pupil of Ricardo's; Mill is the greatest representative of the Adam Smith school in our time; he is far more faithful to Adam Smith than Roscher. Of the notes with which I supplement the translation, the most extensive is a study of the Malthusian law. I take it and try to disprove\* Malthus' formula. This principle is the touchstone of unconditional fidelity to the spirit of Adam Smith."\*\*\*

In the *juridical* sense of the word, of course, it is strange—in view of the above-mentioned old counterposing of socialism and political economy—to accuse a person of propagating socialism who has translated Mill and demanded from economics unconditional fidelity to the spirit of Adam Smith. But this by no means deprives of its *theoretical* importance the question of the sense in which Chernyshevsky commented Mill and whether he believed that economics which was unconditionally faithful to the spirit of Adam Smith should lead to socialism. Below we show that our author did comment Mill in a socialist sense. We also show there the way in which he drew socialist conclusions from the main tenets of political economy. It is, incidentally, unlikely that anyone would question this. It is unlikely that anyone would doubt that Chernyshevsky was a socialist. But, as we have already said in the preface,<sup>83</sup> many people still refuse to recognise Chernyshevsky as an adherent of *utopian* socialism. We trust that our later exposition will reveal to the reader with sufficient clarity that such a refusal is completely unfounded. Here we shall simply note the following:

N. G. Chernyshevsky did regard the old counterposing of socialism and political economy as obsolete. But for him this meant primarily that after the experience of 1848 one could no longer pin one's hopes on people's altruistic feelings: compassion for the oppressed, sympathy for their neighbour, etc.; one had to appeal to their reason and defend socialism from the point of view of advantage, economic "calculation". But, as we shall show, this appeal to calculation did not exclude a utopian view of society.

In the second part of the novel *Prologue* written by Chernyshevsky in Siberia, Levitsky (Dobrolyubov) notes in his diary after a meeting with Volgin (Chernyshevsky): "He does not believe in the people. In his opinion, the people is as bad and vulgar as society."\*\*\* If we are not mistaken, this means that, according to Chernyshevsky's own recollections, his view of the people

\* Mr. Lemke's article contains "develop", but this is an obvious misprint.

\*\* Ibid., same page.

\*\*\* Works, Vol. X, Part 1, Section 2, pp. 215-16.



impressed Dobrolyubov as a total "lack of faith". We shall expound this view in detail below, and the reader will see that N. G. Chernyshevsky really did not count upon the initiative of the people either in Russia, or in the West. The initiative for progress and all changes in the structure of society of benefit to the people belonged, in his opinion, to the "best people", i.e., the intelligentsia. In this respect—and in this respect alone—his view came very close to the views expounded later by P. L. Lavrov in *Historical Letters*. This is not the place to criticise this view. But it is worth reminding the reader of the period in which N. G. Chernyshevsky formed it: this was the age of disillusion which followed the collapse of hopes that had been pinned on the movement of 1848, an age which was characterised by the albeit temporary but total depression of the West-European working class.

This age of disillusion did not, of course, favour the emergence in Chernyshevsky of any exaggerated hopes for the near future. This is probably the reason why, shortly after completing the university course (in 1850), he went to Saratov where he received the post of senior teacher in the gymnasium. But the diary which he kept in Saratov and which relates to 1852-53 shows that although he had no exaggerated hopes for the near future, Chernyshevsky was not one of those people who had completely lost all faith in the more or less imminent triumph of progressive undertakings. Take this, for example. On March 5, 1853 he wrote: "Finally I should marry, in order to become more cautious. Because if I continue as I have begun, I may really be caught. I must have the idea that I do not belong to myself, that I have not the right to risk myself, otherwise who knows? Will I not risk? I must have it as a defence against the democratic, against the revolutionary trend, and nothing but the thought of a wife can be this defence."\* He did in fact marry Olga Sokratovna Vasilyeva on April 29, 1853. It must be said, however, that he himself could hardly have expected seriously that marriage would defend him "against the democratic, against the revolutionary trend". He warned his fiancée that he might come to a bad end. From the first part of the novel *Prologue* it can be seen that he had talks with Olga Sokratovna on this subject after she became his wife as well. How did he picture the train of events which might threaten his downfall? This is answered by the following passage in *Levitsky's Diary* (part two of the novel *Prologue*). Reading this passage, one must remember that the narrator in it is Levitsky (Dobrolyubov) who is recording words spoken to him by Volgin (Chernyshevsky):

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\* *Works*, Vol. X, Part 2, Section 3, p. 39. In another passage he writes: "I must restrain myself by something on the road to Iskander" (*ibid.*, p. 96).

"A serious time will come. When?—I am young, therefore as far as I am concerned it is all the same to me when it comes; in any case it will find me still at the height of my powers, if I do not waste them. How will it come? Like the little mess of the Crimean War came; without our exertions; I don't have to make an effort; no effort will delay or hasten the breaking up of the Neva. How will it come? We are speaking of a time of strength—only the power of nature is strong.

*A whirlwind blows freely through the air now;  
Who knows from whence it flies and how.*

"The possibilities for the future are various. Which of them will come to pass? Does it matter? Would I like to hear his personal opinion as to which possibility is more likely than the others? The disillusionment of society and from disillusionment a new liberalism in a new style, as petty, contemptible and loathsome as before for any intelligent person, no matter what his cast of mind; as loathsome for the intelligent radical as it is empty, scandalous, cowardly, base and stupid for the intelligent conservative, and it will develop, develop, basely and cowardly, until somewhere in Europe—most likely in France—a storm rises and sweeps over the rest of Europe as in 1848.

"In 1830 the storm raged in Western Germany only, in 1848 it seized Vienna and Berlin. Judging by this, one is bound to think that next time it will seize St. Petersburg and Moscow."\*

In all probability Chernyshevsky reasoned thus about himself as well on completion of the university course: "It is impossible to undertake anything practical now, but a serious time will undoubtedly come under the influence of this or that 'mess' in international life. Then it will be possible to embark on social activity, but for the time being I must muster my strength and work upon myself, and upon the few, for the most part, young people with whom I come into direct contact." And he did work, of course. It would be hard to doubt that, as a teacher at the Saratov gymnasium, he missed the opportunity of planting good seeds in the young souls. But this was done in the expectation of broader tasks, this was a preparatory period, the "prologue" to his social activity. What his mood was in Saratov may be seen from the following words written in his diary on March 7, 1853 after a performance of *William Tell*: "I was tremendously moved by *William Tell*, I even cried."\*\* These words may, perhaps, even produce an exaggerated impression upon the reader, by suggesting to him that Chernyshevsky was an unreserved supporter of the revolutionary mode of action. To prevent such an error, we again

\* *Works*, Vol. X, Part 1, Section 2, pp. 214-15.

\*\* *Works*, Vol. X, Part 2, Section 3, p. 93.

turn to *Levitsky's Diary* and quote from it the passage which follows immediately after the one just quoted. We remind the reader that Levitsky is conveying Volgin's thoughts.

"Is it true? [i.e., is it true that the future European storm will seize St. Petersburg and Moscow?—*G.P.*] There is nothing true about this, it is only likely. Is such a likelihood comforting? In his opinion, there is nothing good about this at all. The smoother and calmer the course of improvements, the better. This is a general law of nature: a given amount of power produces the greatest amount of motion when it acts smoothly and continuously; action in stops and starts is less economical. Political economy has discovered that this truth is just as immutable in social life as well. Hence it is to be hoped that everything here will happen quietly, peacefully. The calmer, the better."\*

In the novel *Prologue* Chernyshevsky portrays his mood as it was in the middle of the fifties. Further on we shall show that later his view on "stops" and "starts" changed most significantly. But we have no grounds for thinking that when he was a student and in the first few years after his completion of the university course he took a different view of "stops" and "starts" from his view of them during the time when he first closely associated with Dobrolyubov. This is why we assume that the young Chernyshevsky was by no means a convinced supporter of revolution.

In order to finish with the period of our author's stay in Saratov, we would note, also on the basis of his own diary, two features of his character which are most worthy of attention.

Our "reactionaries" usually pictured him to themselves as the "leader of the nihilists", and in their eyes the "nihilists" were nothing but a

*Band of robbers and thieves  
Who made their parents grieve....*

The diary gives a somewhat different idea of the "leader of the nihilists". Intending to marry O. S. Vasilyeva, Chernyshevsky wrote of his parents: "They cannot judge in this matter, because their ideas of family life, of the qualities necessary in a wife, of the relations between husband and wife, of housekeeping and one's way of life are certainly not mine. I am a person from an entirely different world than they, and it would be just as strange to follow them in relation to politics and religion, for example, as to ask their advice on marriage. This is in general. In particular, they know absolutely nothing about my character and what sort of wife I need. In this matter no one but myself can judge, because no one can enter into my character and my ideas except me."\*\* It is hard to object to this now in any way, and it

\* *Works*, Vol. X, Part 1, Section 2, p. 215.

\*\* *Works*, Vol. X, Part 2, Section 3, p. 47.

would seem that the 24-year-old Chernyshevsky could have married at his own discretion with a clear conscience. Yet his conscience was far from clear, and he was constantly tormented by doubts as to how he should act if his parents did not agree to his marriage. "I was born to be obedient, submissive," he wrote, "but this obedience must be free. You regard me too despotically, like a child. 'Even at seventy you will still be my son and you will obey me then, as I obeyed my mother until fifty.' Whose fault is it that your ...\* are so great that I must say: in trivialities, in things that do not matter, and before these trivialities were important things, I was an obedient child. But in this matter I cannot, I have not the right, because it is a serious matter. No, madam, here I am no longer the son whom you kept thus: 'Permit me to visit Nik. Iv., dear Mother.'—'Very well, you may go!'—'Permit me to visit Anna Nik., dear Mother.' 'Do not dare visit her, she is a nasty woman.' No, in this matter I do not intend to ask permission, and if you wish to order me, I must tell you regretfully that you will order in vain.'\*\*\*"

But since Chernyshevsky was afraid they would order him nevertheless, he took the following decision to be on the safe side. "If you persist, very well, I shall not argue, I shall kill myself. We shall see what happens then. And if the need arises, I shall carry out my threat, because it is better to die than to live without honour in my own eyes, or estranged from those whom I love and who do in fact love me, only are too strange with their claim to know everything and to have the right ideas about people and about how one should and should not behave in the case in question."\*\*\*\*

True, a few lines later Chernyshevsky himself remarks that this fear of obstacles to his marriage on the part of his parents is nothing more than "wild fantasy" and that, in all probability, the matter would be settled easily and quickly. But nevertheless the anxiety aroused in him by the thought of the possibility of such obstacles is extremely characteristic, and the conviction that it would be morally impossible for him to go on living "estranged" from his parents is even more characteristic. All this is most unlike the reactionaries' current idea of the "nihilists"!

Equally out of keeping with it is a character trait of Chernyshevsky's which shows through in these lines of his diary: "Furthermore, I wish to be possessed by my wife with a body which has not belonged to a single woman apart from her. I wish to marry with a virginal body, just as my bride will be virginal."\*\*\*\* The "reactionaries" maintained that the "people of the sixties" preached

\* The publisher could not make out this word.\*\*

\*\* Ibid., pp. 48-49.

\*\*\* Ibid., p. 49.

\*\*\*\* Ibid., p. 40.

sexual debauchery,\* many people, even those who were not "reactionaries", sincerely believed that only the "pure" morality of Count Tolstoy had begun to repair in part the moral damage caused by such unbridling. We can see to what extent this was correct.

Shortly after his marriage Chernyshevsky moved to St. Petersburg where throughout the first year he continued his pedagogical activity, employed in the Second Cadet Corps in "the post of teacher of the third rank", as an official paper describes him. It was then that his first, as far as we know, printed works began to appear. At first he wrote in *Otechestvenniye Zapiski*, and then in the *Sovremennik*. Beginning in 1855 and right up to his arrest Chernyshevsky worked almost exclusively on the *Sovremennik*. This is the general rule, so to say, to which we know of two exceptions: in 1858 his critical article "The Russian at a Rendezvous" appeared in the *Athenaeum* (No. 3), and in the same year he was for a while editor of a military collection. During his first year in St. Petersburg he worked on his master's dissertation "The Aesthetic Relation of Art to Reality". Consideration of this dissertation by the university authorities dragged on, according to the publisher of N. G. Chernyshevsky's *Collected Works*, until 1855, and, as far as we know, ended unfavourably for the young scholar: the trend of thought revealed in his work was not to the liking of the university authorities, and he did not receive the title of Master of Arts. But it was precisely this misadventure with his dissertation that brought its author together, so to say, with the editors of the *Sovremennik*, which was soon put, to quote N. G. Chernyshevsky's own words, entirely in his charge.

Concerning his dissertation N. G. Chernyshevsky informed his father in a letter of September 21, 1853: "I am writing my dissertation on aesthetics. If it gets through the university in its present form, it will be original, incidentally, in that it will contain not a single quotation, and only *one* reference. If this is found to be insufficiently academic, however, I shall add several hundred quotations in three days. I can say in confidence that Messrs. the local professors of philology have never studied the subject which I have taken for my dissertation and are therefore unlikely to see what relation my ideas bear to the modern mode of thought about aesthetic questions. They might even imagine that I am a follower of the very philosophers whose opinions I challenge, if I did not speak of this clearly. Therefore I do not think the people here will understand to what extent the questions which I am discussing are important, unless I am obliged to explain this directly. In general our concepts of philosophy have become

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\* See, for example, Professor Tsitovich's filthy lampoon: "What They Did in the Novel *What Is To Be Done?*"

very dim since the people who understood philosophy and kept up with it died or fell silent.”\*

In a letter of May 3, 1855 he wrote again to his father: “To save time and expense I have printed the dissertation on large paper in very small print; moreover, to the same end I shortened it considerably (although the university censor did not cross out a single word), after the manuscript had already been approved for printing. For this reason there are only  $6\frac{1}{2}$  printer's sheets, instead of the 20 which would have been taken up by it without shortening and in normal print.... Outwardly it has the distinction of containing *not a single quotation*—contrary to the general custom of playing the academic with this cheap erudition. Another distinction is that it was written by me *without any preliminary drafts*—which can hardly have been the case with anyone else. By all this I wanted to give myself the pleasure of laughing privately at people who (cannot) do the same. About the content I shall say nothing here—that is for another letter. The title you know: ‘The Aesthetic Relation of Art to Reality’....”\*\*

N. G. Chernyshevsky was the chief publicist and until the middle of 1856 the chief literary critic of the *Sovremennik*. It will always be to the great credit of Nekrasov and Panayev that they did not shun, as almost all the other “friends of Belinsky's” did, Chernyshevsky and those who shared his views. True, from the point of view of the journal's success they had no cause to regret that they had put it at the disposal of the author of “The Aesthetic Relation”. Already in the December issue of the *Sovremennik* for 1855 there appeared the first article of the frequently mentioned series *Essays on the Gogol Period of Russian Literature*, one of Chernyshevsky's finest works and still the best textbook for anyone who wishes to acquaint himself with the criticism of the Gogol period. The second article in this fine series of essays was printed in the January issue, the third in the February issue, and the fourth in the April issue of the *Sovremennik* for the following year. These four articles contain an appreciation of the literary activity of Polevoi, Senkovsky, Shevryyov and Nadezhdin. In the July issue the author turned to Belinsky, to whom the remaining five essays are devoted. In these articles the name of Belinsky was mentioned for the first time since 1848, when Belinsky began to be regarded as a banned writer. With the appearance of the *Essays* it could be said with gratifying certainty, and without the slightest exaggeration, that Belinsky had a worthy successor. From the moment that Chernyshevsky appeared as critic and publicist of the *Sovremennik*, this journal was again assured of the predominant place among Russian periodicals

\* *Works*, Vol. X, Part 2, Section 1, p. 84.

\*\* *Ibid.*, same page.

which had belonged to it during Belinsky's lifetime. The *Sovremennik* was heeded with interest and respect by the advanced section of the reading public, all fresh, budding literary talent was naturally drawn towards it. Thus, in the middle of 1856 the young Dobrolyubov began to write for it. It is difficult for people of our day to imagine how great the importance of journalism was then in Russia. Today public opinion has far outgrown journalism; in the forties it was still too young for it. The late fifties and early sixties were the age of the greatest concord between public opinion and journalism and of the greatest influence of journalism on public opinion. Only in such conditions was it possible to have the passionate interest in literary activity and the sincere belief in the importance of literary propaganda which one finds in all the eminent writers of that time. In brief, it was the Golden Age of Russian journalism. The unfortunate outcome of the Crimean War compelled the government to make a few concessions to educated society and effect at least the more pressing reforms that had long since become indispensable. Soon the problem of freeing the peasants was placed on the order of the day, a problem directly affecting the interests of all estates. Needless to say, Nikolai Gavrilovich eagerly set about elaborating this problem. His excellent articles on the peasants' cause were written in 1857 and 1858. The mutual relations of our social forces in the epoch of the abolition of serfdom are now fairly well known. We shall, therefore, mention them only in passing, only insofar as it may be necessary to elucidate the role adopted in this matter by our advanced publicists, chief of whom then was N. G. Chernyshevsky. It is well known that these writers zealously defended the interests of the peasants. Our author wrote one article after another, advocating the emancipation of the peasants with land, and maintaining that the government would find no difficulty whatever in redeeming the lands allotted to the peasants. He supported his thesis both with general theoretical considerations and with the most detailed estimates. "Indeed, in what way can the redemption of land prove difficult? How can it be too much for the people to bear? That is improbable," he wrote in the article "*Is Land Redemption Difficult?*" "It runs counter to the fundamental concepts of economics. Political economy says plainly that all the material capital which a certain generation takes over from previous generations is not too considerable in value compared with the mass of values produced by the labour of that generation. For example, all of the land belonging to the French people, together with all the buildings and their contents, together with all the ships and cargoes, all the livestock and money and other riches belonging to that country, is hardly worth a hundred thousand million francs, while the labour of the French people produces fifteen or more thousand million francs' worth of values

annually, i.e., in no more than seven years the French people produce a mass of values equal to that of the whole of France from the Channel to the Pyrenees. Consequently, if the French had to redeem all France, they could do so in the lifetime of one generation, using only one-fifth of their revenue for the purpose. And what is the point at issue in our country? Is it the whole of Russia with all her riches that we must redeem? No, only the land. And is it to be all the Russian land? No, the redemption would affect only those gubernias of European Russia alone where serfdom is deep-rooted," etc.\* After showing that the lands to be redeemed would constitute no more than one-sixth of the area of European Russia, he puts forward as many as eight plans for carrying out redemption. According to him, if the government were to accept any one of these plans, it could redeem the allotted lands not only without burdening the peasants, but also to the great advantage of the state treasury. Chernyshevsky's plans were all based on the idea that it was "*necessary to fix the most moderate prices possible in determining the amount of redemption payments*". We know now how much consideration the government gave to the interests of the peasantry in abolishing serfdom and how much it heeded Chernyshevsky's advice regarding moderation in fixing redemption payments. Whereas our government, in freeing the peasants, never for a moment forgot the benefits to the state treasury, it thought very little about the interests of the peasants. In the redemption operations it was exclusively fiscal and landowner interests that were borne in mind. And this is perfectly understandable, for no one has either the need or the desire to think of the interests of an estate (in this case, the peasant estate) which cannot defend them vigorously and systematically itself. But at that time, when there were still only rumours of the emancipation of the peasants, the most advanced Russians thought somewhat differently. They believed that the government itself without great difficulty could understand to what extent its own advantages coincided with the interests of the peasants. Such hopes were, incidentally, nourished for quite a long time by Herzen. Chernyshevsky also nourished them. Hence the persistence with which he kept returning in his articles to the peasant question, and the diligence with which he explained to the government its own interests. But Chernyshevsky was the first Russian writer to understand that he was deluding himself with a vain hope and to cease trying to persuade those who did not pay the slightest attention to his arguments. This is also greatly to his credit.

We shall not expound and analyse here the view on the Russian commune advanced by Chernyshevsky in his articles on the

\* *Works*, Vol. IV, pp. 335-36.



peasant question. It is examined by us in detail below. We would merely add here that, even in the period of his greatest enthusiasm for the commune, Chernyshevsky in his views on it remained alien to the semi-Slavophil extremes to which Herzen went or—under the obvious influence of Herzen—M. L. Mikhailov in his Appeal "To the Younger Generation" (1861).\*

Chernyshevsky very quickly gained influence in our advanced literature. But however great this influence was, he had very few people who were like-minded, in the true sense of the word. The following words of Volgin, which are addressed to Nivelzin in the first part of the novel *Prologue*, give us grounds for thinking thus: "The heads of all our enlighteners of the public are filled with rubbish; they write nonsense and totally confuse Russian society which is, in any case, in a state of near-madness. There is not a single person among them whom I could take as a comrade. I am compelled willy-nilly to write all the articles which express the opinion of the journal. And I cannot keep up with it. There is no one with a lucid mind, and that's that!"\*\* Dobrolyubov alone was a lucid mind on which Chernyshevsky could rely completely. This was why our author loved him with such a truly enthusiastic love.\*\*\*

Later Chernyshevsky found a good helper in M. A. Antonovich, to whom our "cold" author also, evidently, became very quickly attached. But Dobrolyubov soon died, and this loss was an irreplaceable one for the *Sovremennik*.

N. G. Chernyshevsky was very fond of polemicising. He confesses that even his friends always noticed in him an extraordinary, "in their opinion even excessive love of elucidating controversial questions by means of impassioned polemics".\*\*\*\* Polemics always seemed to him a very convenient or, to be more precise,

\* See the second supplement to the collection *State Crimes in Russia. Russkaya Istoricheskaya Biblioteka*, No. 5 (Paris, 1905), p. 5 et seq.

\*\* *Works*, Vol. X, Part 1, Section 2, p. 89.

\*\*\* The confidence which he had in Dobrolyubov as a writer from the very first meeting is clear from the following scene in *Levitsky's Diary*. Levitsky writes: "After what happened yesterday I cannot doubt that he [Volgin.—G. P.] regards me as a good contributor. But these words surprised me: 'You are giving me a completely free hand in the journal?' 'Well, would you be of much use to me, if it were not so? Contributors who have to be guided on leading strings are ten a penny, but what is the use of them? Checking and correcting is such a bore, that it is easier to write the thing oneself.' 'So you won't check my articles?' 'What will be so remarkable about them? To tell the truth I won't even read them after they are printed, not only before. I have to read far too much rubbish as it is—ha, ha, ha!—thank me for the compliment.' 'But I might make mistakes.' 'To hell with you and your mistakes! I'm only wasting time with you—ha, ha, ha! Well, goodbye. Come the day after tomorrow. We'll have another talk, even if it's about nothing'" (*Works*, Vol. X, Part 1, Section 2, pp. 210-11).

\*\*\*\* *Works*, Vol. IV, p. 304.

essential instrument for introducing new ideas into society.\* Nevertheless at the beginning of his literary activity he seems to have avoided polemics. The *Essays on the Gogol Period* are written in a calm and conciliatory tone. Only in relation to Shevryyov, a well-known Moscow critic in Belinsky's day, does he exhibit a trenchant irony, and he also writes about Senkovsky (Baron Brambeus) with scornful pity, describing him as a man who wasted his tremendous powers on fruitless literary clowning. For the most part, however, he speaks of the other writers of the Gogol period with praise. Even in the literary activity of Pogodin, whom Belinsky's circle so detested and ridiculed, even in Pogodin's activity he finds useful and praiseworthy features. He speaks of the Slavophiles with unfeigned respect. In spite of all their obvious delusions, he considers them to be true friends of enlightenment and warmly sympathises with their attitude towards the Russian land commune.

Without touching here upon his view of the commune, we would remark only that already in disputes on this form of land-ownership he was compelled to abandon his calm, genial tone and employ his polemical talent to the full. The acknowledged representatives of liberal economy had a bad time of it, particularly Vernadsky, the editor of the *Ekonomicheskyy Ukazatel*. Chernyshevsky positively immortalised this "S.C." (State Counsellor) and "D. Hist. Sc., Pol. Ec. and Stat." (i.e., Doctor of Historical Science, Political Economy and Statistics, which is how Vernadsky, proud of all his ranks and diplomas, signed himself). The devastated scholar not only fled the battlefield, but, to crown the comedy, began to assure of his respect the self-same Chernyshevsky whom, at the beginning of the dispute, he had taken the liberty of treating like an impertinent ignoramus. It must be confessed that it would hardly be possible to defend any cause more skilfully than Chernyshevsky defended the commune. He said in its favour absolutely everything that could be said. And if his settlement of the controversial question cannot be regarded as satisfactory now, this is explained only by the extreme ab-

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\* In the *Essays on the Gogol Period* he defends Nadezhdin against the many reproaches for his passion for sharp polemics. "Why did Nadoumko (Nadezhdin's pseudonym) use such a sharp tone? Could he not have said the same thing in a milder form? They are quite remarkable—our literary concepts, and all other concepts for that matter! The question is constantly being asked as to why the farmer ploughs his field with a crude iron plough or ploughshare! How else can one plough up soil which is rich but heavy to till? Surely it is not hard to understand that no important question is decided without war, and war is conducted with fire and sword, and not with diplomatic phrases, which are appropriate only when the aim of the struggle conducted by arms has been attained? It is unlawful to attack the unarmed and defenceless, the old and crippled, but the poets and men of letters against whom Nadezhdin was writing were not the like of these" (*Works*, Vol. II, p. 130).

stractness of the point of view from which he looked at this question. It must, however, be remarked that, as we shall see below, he defended the Russian land commune most conventionally.

After commencing with communal land tenure, Chernyshevsky's dispute with our liberal economists rapidly assumed a broader nature and turned to general questions of economic policy. The liberal economists supported the principle of state non-interference; Chernyshevsky challenged it. And again it happened that the dispute on the non-interference of the state in the economic life of the people served as an occasion for a new victory for our author. His article "Economic Activity and Legislation"\* may be regarded as one of the most skilful refutations of the theory of "laissez faire, laissez passer" not only in Russian economic literature, but in world economic literature in general. In it our author employs all his dialectical power and polemical skill. He seems to be amusing himself with this fight, in which he parries the blows of his opponents with such ease. He plays with them, like a cat with a mouse; he makes all manner of concessions to them, expresses his willingness to agree to any of their tenets, to accept any interpretation of any given proposition — and then, after appearing to have given them every chance of victory and placed them in the most favourable conditions for their triumph, only then does he go over to the offensive and reduce them to absurdity with three or four syllogisms. Then new concessions begin, new, even more favourable interpretations of one and the same tenet and — new proof of its absurdity. And at the end of the article Chernyshevsky, as was his wont, points out a moral to his opponents and makes them feel how little they know not only about the strict methods of scientific thinking, but also about the basic requirements of ordinary common sense. It is interesting that the principle of state non-interference, which had such ardent supporters in Russia in the late fifties and early sixties, was soon abandoned almost completely by Russian economists. To a large extent this is explained by the general state of our industry and trade and by the consequent influence on our theoreticians of the German school of Katheder socialism. But in this case the fact that the principle in question, from the very beginning of its dissemination in Russian literature, encountered such a powerful opponent as N. G. Chernyshevsky is undoubtedly of great significance. Having been taught a lesson, the Russian Manchester men thought it prudent to fall silent, fade into the background, and retire.

Of course, if we wanted to compare the arguments advanced by Chernyshevsky in this polemic with the arguments which Marx employed, for example, in the Speech on Freedom of Trade we

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\* Reprinted in Vol. IV of the *Collected Works*, pp. 422-63.

would again have to admit that our author's point of view suffers from abstractness. But this is a general shortcoming of his economic views, which will be discussed in Part Two of our work.

It was not on economic problems alone that Chernyshevsky had to wage a fierce polemic. Neither were his opponents only liberal economists. As the influence of the *Sovremennik* circle in Russian literature grew, the greater were the number of attacks launched from the most varied quarters both on that circle in general and on our author in particular. The contributors to the *Sovremennik* were regarded as dangerous people who were prepared to destroy all the notorious "foundations". Some of "Belinsky's friends", who at first considered it possible to go along with Chernyshevsky and those holding his views, repudiated the *Sovremennik* as an organ of the "nihilists", and began to declare that Belinsky would never have approved of its trend. Such was I. S. Turgenev's attitude.\* Even Herzen grumbled at the "clowns" in his *Kolokol*. He warned them that, "while exhausting all their ridicule over the literature of exposures, our dear clowns forget that on this slippery path they may not merely 'whistle' themselves into becoming like Bulgarin and Grech, but even into being decorated with the Stanislav Order". Herzen affirmed that there were excellent things in the "literature of exposures" that the "clowns" were ridiculing. "Do you imagine that all the tales of Shchedrin and others can just be hurled into the water together with Oblomov<sup>85</sup> on their necks? You indulge yourselves too much, gentlemen!"\*\* The reference to Shchedrin was extremely unfortunate since Chernyshevsky himself appreciated his works greatly. In general, everything shows that Herzen was misled by his liberal friends, such as Kavelin. The "clowns"—or "whistlers", as they were called in Russia—were not ridiculing the exposures, but the naive people who could not or would not go beyond innocent exposures, forgetting the moral of Krylov's fable *The Cat and the Cook*.\*\*\*<sup>86</sup>

Herzen himself was to see very soon how bad in a political sense were those liberal friends who kept discussing his relations with Chernyshevsky. When he had to break with K. D. Kavelin, he perhaps told himself that the "jaundiced ones" were not entirely wrong.\*\*\*

\* Chernyshevsky relates that Turgenev could still tolerate him to some extent, but had no patience at all with Dobrolyubov. "You're just a snake, but Dobrolyubov is a cobra," he said to Chernyshevsky (see the letter already quoted: "By Way of an Expression of Gratitude", *Works*, Vol. IX, p. 103).

\*\* The article "Very Dangerous!!" in *Kolokol*, No. 44.

\*\*\* Regarding the article "Very Dangerous!!" and its more or less conjectural consequences, see, among others, Vetrinsky's book *Herzen* (St. Petersburg, 1908, p. 354).

\*\*\*\* The history of this break may be followed in the letters of K. D. Kavelin and I. S. Turgenev to A. I. Herzen, published by M. Dragomanov in Geneva in 1892.

Incidentally, most of the articles in the *Svistok* which evoked the especial dissatisfaction of the well-bred liberals did not belong to the pen of N. G. Chernyshevsky. Only rarely did he contribute to it, as he was overwhelmed with other work. In the closing years of his literary activity he not only contributed regularly to every issue of the *Sovremennik*, but every issue almost always contained several articles by him. Usually his articles were distributed among the various sections of the journal as follows: firstly, he contributed an article on some general theoretical problem, then he wrote a political survey, reviewed several new books, and, lastly, by way of relaxation and diversion, as it were, he made polemical sorties against his opponents. The *Sovremennik* for 1861 was particularly rich in polemical articles written by him. It was at this time that he wrote his well-known "Polemical Gems", "National Tactlessness" (attacking the Lvov *Slovo*), "Popular Muddleheadedness" (attacking Aksakov's *Dyen*; we shall speak of this article later) and many polemical notes in the Russian and Foreign Literature section.

What is now especially interesting in "Polemical Gems" is our author's views of his own literary activity. We shall cite them here. Chernyshevsky was very well aware that he held a prominent place in Russian literature. His opponents dreaded him, and occasionally even paid him compliments. But his growing renown did not make him happy in the least. He had too low an opinion of Russian literature to consider the prominent place he occupied in it to be honourable. He was "completely cold to his literary reputation". The only thing he was interested in was whether he would be able to preserve the freshness of his thought and feeling till those better days when our literature would become really useful to society. "I know that better times will come for literary activity, when it will be of real benefit to society, and when he who possesses talent will really earn a good name. And so I am wondering whether when the time comes I shall still be able to serve society properly. Fresh strength and fresh convictions are needed for this. But I see that I am beginning to join the company of 'respected' writers, that is to say, of those writers who have been wrung dry, who lag behind the movement of social requirements. This rouses a feeling of bitterness. But what is there to be done? Age takes its toll. Youth does not come twice. I cannot help envying those who are younger and fresher than I...."\* To encounter these noble fears is somehow strange now for us, who know that when Chernyshevsky expressed them he had no more than a year of freedom left. The lines quoted were printed in the July issue of the *Sovremennik* for 1861, and in July of the following year he was already in the Fortress of SS Peter and

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\* *Works*, Vol. VIII, p. 231.

Paul.... But one can imagine what contempt for his enemies was felt by this man, who in the full realisation of his vast superiority to them nevertheless attached no worth even to his own literary merits. And indeed almost every page of "Polemical Gems" radiates a cold contempt for the reprimanders of the *Sovremennik*. It is particularly noticeable in the reply to *Otechestvenniye Zapiski*. Chernyshevsky is not at all angry with his opponents from *Otechestvenniye Zapiski*. He admonishes them almost affectionately, as a good teacher admonishes a schoolboy who has misbehaved. Of course, a good teacher, reproving his charge, sometimes tells him very bitter truths and does not conceal his intellectual superiority to him. But he does so solely in the interests of the pupil. Chernyshevsky also acts thus. He does not forget a single error, a single slip of *Otechestvenniye Zapiski* and admonishes the editors paternally for their blunders. He is most vexed with them for the imprudent fervour with which they rushed into battle with him. You are not competent to polemicise with me, he repeats to them, having shown the complete invalidity of this or that charge which they have levelled against him. When the opportunity arises, he tells them bluntly that he knows far more and understands things far better than they, that they are simply not in a position to judge the new ideas which he champions in literature. "You wish to know how extensive my knowledge is?" he addresses himself to Dudyshkin, who accused him of insolent ignorance on the evidence of other journals. "To that I can give you but one reply: incomparably more extensive than yours. And you know it yourself. So why did you try to get the answer in print? It was unwise, most unwise to put yourself in such a position. And please do not take this as pride: there is not much to be proud of in knowing more than you! And again do not take this as meaning that I want to say you have too little knowledge. No, this is not so: you do know something, and in general you are an educated person. Only why do you polemicise so badly?"\* etc. All this would, perhaps, be too caustic and presumptuous, if it were not undoubtedly true.

Meanwhile, feelings were rising, at least in a section of Russian "society". The student youth were filled with unrest and secret revolutionary organisations were springing up which printed their own manifestoes and programmes and awaited an imminent peasant uprising. We already know that Chernyshevsky fully recognised the possibility of an impending "serious time" in Russia and we shall yet see how strongly the rise of the social mood was reflected in his activity as a publicist. But was he in any way connected with the secret societies? It is not yet possible to reply with certainty to this question, and who knows whether

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\* *Works*, Vol. VIII, p. 270.

we shall ever have the facts to answer it. In the opinion of Mr. M. Lemke, who made an excellent study of the N. G. Chernyshevsky case, "it can be *presumed* (his italics) that he was the author of the proclamation 'To the Manorial Peasants', which the court found him guilty of having written". Mr. Lemke supports his conjecture by pointing to the style and content of the proclamation. We find these arguments not without foundation. But we hasten to repeat with Mr. Lemke that "all these are more or less probable considerations, and no more".\* We also consider fairly well founded Mr. Lemke's opinion that the famous paper *Velikoruss* was, in part, the work of Chernyshevsky. Mr. Lemke supports his hypothesis by quoting Mr. Stakhevich, who for several years lived with Chernyshevsky in Siberia: "I noticed that Chernyshevsky was obviously sympathetically inclined towards the paper which appeared at irregular intervals under the title of *Velikoruss*; I recall three issues coming out. As I listened to Nikolai Gavrilovich's conversation, I sometimes noticed that both his thoughts and the way he expressed them strongly reminded me of the paper *Velikoruss*, and I decided in my own mind that he was either the author or, at least, co-author of the paper which advocated the need for constitutional reforms."\*\* We are in full agreement with Mr. Stakhevich: the style and content of *Velikoruss* are indeed very reminiscent of Chernyshevsky's journalistic articles. And if Chernyshevsky was in fact the author, then that, of course, explains the circumstance that *Velikoruss* was far wiser and more tactful than other such "papers" of the time.<sup>87</sup>

Simultaneously with the rise of the extreme party in Russia, there was a growth of the revolutionary movement in Poland. Had Chernyshevsky any formal relations with the Polish revolutionaries of whom there were not a few in St. Petersburg at that time? Again, there are no data on this point. Not wishing to indulge in conjectures, we shall limit ourselves, in clarifying Chernyshevsky's general sympathies towards the Polish cause, to data obtainable from his writings; however, even such data are not numerous.

We know that the Slavophiles approved greatly of the struggle of the Galician Ruthenians against the Poles. Chernyshevsky was always sympathetically inclined towards the Little Russians. He considered Belinsky's negative attitude to the emerging Little Russian literature to be a great mistake. In the January

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\* M. K. Lemke, "The Case of N. G. Chernyshevsky", *Byloye*, 1906, No. 4, p. 179.

\*\* М. К. Лемке, «Процесс Велikorуссцев», *Былое*, 1906 г., № 7, стр. 92. [M. K. Lemke, "The Trial of the Velikoruss Publishers", *Byloye*, 1906, No. 7, p. 92.] Mr. Stakhevich's article was published in the *Zakaspiiskoye Obozreniye*, 1905, No. 143.

issue of the *Sovremennik* for 1861 he published a very sympathetic article on the occasion of the appearance of *Osnova*, the organ of the Little Russians. But his attitude towards the struggle of the Galician Ruthenians against the Poles could not be one of unconditional approval. First of all, he did not like the fact that the Ruthenians sought the support of the Viennese government. Nor did he like the influential role of the clergy in the movement of the Galician Ruthenians. "Lay affairs", he wrote, "should be the concern of laymen." Finally, Chernyshevsky did not like the exclusively *national* formulation of this question, which he regarded as primarily an *economic* one. In an article entitled "National Tactlessness" (*Sovremennik*, 1861, July) attacking the *Lvov Slovo*, Chernyshevsky sharply criticised the excessive nationalism of that organ. "It is very possible that a careful examination of existing relations," he wrote, "would show the *Lvov Slovo* that at the basis of the matter there is a question that is far removed from the racial question—the question of estates. It is very possible that it would see Ruthenians and Poles on each of the two sides—people differing in race, but of the same social position. We do not believe that the Polish peasant should be hostile to the alleviation of the obligations and, in general, of the living conditions of the Ruthenian settlers. We do not believe that the sentiments of the Ruthenian landowners should differ very much in this matter from the sentiments of the Polish landowners. If we are not mistaken, the root of the Galician question lies not in relations of race, but of estate."

The mutual hostility of the peoples composing Austria was bound to appear even more tactless to Chernyshevsky since the Viennese government then, as previously, derived great advantages from it. "When one reflects carefully, one is not surprised at the many years of existence of the Austrian Empire," he wrote in a political review in the same issue of the *Sovremennik* that published the article "National Tactlessness"; "and why should it not maintain itself when there is such 'excellent' political tact on the part of the nationalities embraced within its borders." To Chernyshevsky the Austrian Germans, Czechs, Croats and, as we have seen, Ruthenians seemed equally "slow-witted". He was afraid that the Slav "slow-wittedness" which was particularly evident in 1848-49 would again go very far. At the beginning of the sixties Hungary was waging a stubborn struggle against the Viennese reactionary centralists. The discontent of the Hungarians was running so high that at one time it could have been expected that there would be a revolutionary outburst in their country. In his political reviews, our author repeatedly expressed the fear that, in the event of a revolutionary movement in Hungary, the Austrian Slavs would again become obedient tools of reaction. The tactics of many Slav tribes in Austria at that time could



only strengthen such fears, since the Austrian Slavs ventured to boast of the disgraceful role they had played in the 1848-49 events. Chernyshevsky strongly condemned these tactics and showed that it would have been more to their advantage if, on the contrary, they had supported the enemies of the Viennese government, enemies from whom they could have obtained substantial concessions. He said this concerning the attitude of the Croats to the Hungarians, and repeated it to the Ruthenians. "The estate party hostile to the Ruthenians," we read in his article "National Tactlessness", "is now ready for concessions.... It would do no harm for the Lvov *Slovo* to give this some thought; perhaps the concessions which people who seem to it to be enemies are sincerely prepared to make, perhaps these concessions are so great that they would satisfy the Ruthenian settlers fully; in any event these concessions are without doubt far greater and far more important than the concessions the Ruthenian settlers can get from the Austrians."

In Chernyshevsky's eyes the principles expressed in this article were, of course, of more than local, Galician significance. He would evidently have liked to make them also the basis of all relations of the Little Russians with the Poles, and thus his article "National Tactlessness" was a kind of warning to the Little Russians who formed part of the Russian Empire.

In the same year a review of part two of *The Archives of South-West Russia* which had just come out was printed in the April issue of the *Sovremennik*. The author of this review discusses, inter alia, the question of the old way of life in Poland and says: "Behind the Polish absence of bureaucratic centralisation lies the urge to establish a social order different from that which other powers had reached" (this is a reference to the Muscovite state, of course), "an order based, not on the sacrificing of the individual to the abstract idea of the state, embodied in the desire for power, but on the agreement of free individuals for their mutual welfare.... Here the social cause is the result of social thought: here the perpetual struggle of concepts and convictions moves from the sphere of thought and word straight to the manifestations of life." Let us assume that Polish society was completely aristocratic, "but the privileged circle could extend further and further and embrace the neglected, outcast mass of the people, deprived of all rights, if civic concepts became broader and grew into general human ideas not restricted by temporary prejudices which limit their fullness".\* Even the Polish democrats did not always show such passion in the defence of the old way of life in Poland. For the whole question was basically how the members of

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\* *Sovremennik*, 1861, April, New Books, p. 443 et seq.

the Upper House of the Polish Diet could be made to recognise "universal human ideas".

On the question of the historical results of joining the Grand Duchy of Lithuania with Poland, the author of the review also disagreed most strongly with our official historians. "Was the state of old Russia in the time of the Olgierds, Lubartas, Skyrigailos and Svidrigailos really better than under the Sigismunds in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries?" he exclaims in reply to historians who argued that the joining with Poland was the sole cause of everything wrong in Western Russia. "It is time we stopped being one-sided and unjust to Poland," he continues, "let us recognise at least the beneficial nature of its influence on old Russia, if only in relation to enlightenment. Let us take the level of intellectual education in those parts of the Russian world which were joined with Poland and compare it with what existed in this respect in the part of our Russian fatherland which remained independent—in the form of the Muscovite state. Was it not from Little Russia that enlightenment came to the Moscow of the seventeenth century, and did not this enlightenment prepare all our subsequent education? And was it not under the influence of Poland that it grew in Little Russia?"

In the opinion of the author of the review, the Poles were not to blame either for the Polonising of Western Russia. The upper class in Western Russia had both the rights and the means to defend its faith and its language and to save its people from humiliation, whom, incidentally, it had itself enslaved. If, in spite of this, the West-Russian aristocracy had become completely Polonised, it had only itself to blame. "You could not preserve yourselves—don't put the blame on others," the author remarks.

Before the publication of the *Collected Works* of Chernyshevsky we were convinced that this review belonged to his pen. But it was not included in the *Collected Works*. Therefore it must be assumed that we were mistaken. We think, however, that the views of the author of the review were very close to Chernyshevsky's views at that time: otherwise they would hardly have appeared in the *Sovremennik*.

Finally, the first part of the novel *Prologue* depicts the friendly attitude of Volgin to Sokolovsky (Sierakowski?). Volgin likes Sokolovsky's utter devotion to his convictions, his lack of conceited pettiness, his self-control, combined with the passionate zeal of the true agitator. Volgin calls him a *real man* and thinks that our liberals could learn a great deal from him. All this is very interesting,\* but it too in no way ex-

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\* Volgin particularly prized in Sokolovsky his "balanced judgment" which he displayed in 1848 when of all his companions-in-arms in Volhynia Region he was the only one not to lose his head and to weigh coolly the chances of the armed insurrection. These proved to be all but nil.

plains Chernyshevsky's practical attitude to the Polish affair.

At that time Chernyshevsky was about 34 years of age. He was in the prime of his mental powers, and who knows to what heights he might not have risen in his development! But he had not long to live in freedom. He was the recognised leader of the extreme party, a highly influential exponent of materialism and socialism. He was considered the "ringleader" of the revolutionary youth, and was blamed for all their outbursts and unrest. As always happens in such cases, rumour exaggerated the affair and even ascribed to Chernyshevsky intentions and actions which were foreign to him. In *Prologue to a Prologue* Chernyshevsky himself describes the liberal sympathetic gossip spread in St. Petersburg concerning Volgin's (i.e., his own) alleged relations with the London circle of Russian exiles. The gossip was occasioned by the most insignificant incidents that had absolutely nothing to do with politics. And, as usual, things did not stop at mere gossip. The "protective" press had long been engaged in literary denunciations of Chernyshevsky. In 1862, the *Sovremennik* was suspended for an indefinite period. Then came non-literary denunciations as well. "The Director of the Third Department of His Imperial Majesty's Own Chancellery," said the indictment of Chernyshevsky, "has received an anonymous letter warning the government against Chernyshevsky, 'that youth ringleader and wily socialist'; 'he himself has announced that he will never be convicted'; he is said to be a pernicious agitator, and people ask to be spared from such a man; 'all Chernyshevsky's former friends, liberal-minded people, seeing that his tendencies were finding expressions in deeds and not merely in words ... have dissociated themselves from him. Unless you remove Chernyshevsky,' writes the author of the letter, 'there will be trouble and bloodshed; they are a band of rabid demagogues, of reckless people.... Perhaps they will eventually be eliminated, but just think how much innocent blood will be shed because of them.... There are committees of such socialists in Voronezh, Saratov, Tambov and elsewhere, and everywhere they inflame the youth.... Send Chernyshevsky away wherever you like, but be quick to deprive him of the opportunity to act.... Deliver us from Chernyshevsky for the sake of public peace.'"

On July 7, 1862 Chernyshevsky was arrested. We shall not describe the course of his case: it is described in great detail and very well by Mr. Lemke.\* The Senate sentenced N. G. Chernyshevsky to civil execution followed by penal servitude in the mines for 14 years and then exile in Siberia for life. The Senate's sentence was conveyed to the State Council, which approved it

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\* See the article already quoted "The Case of N. G. Chernyshevsky", *Byloye*, 1906, March, April, May.

in full. The Emperor Alexander II reduced the term of penal servitude by half.

By the end of 1864 Chernyshevsky was already in Kadaya in Trans-Baikal area, where his wife Olga Sokratovna was allowed to visit him for three days with their young son Mikhail. After the three years in Kadaya Chernyshevsky was moved to Alexandrovsky Zavod in Nerchinsk okrug, and at the end of his term of penal servitude he was sent to Vilyuisk which was 450 versts from Yakutsk. Nikolai Gavrilovich did not return to Russia until 1883, when he was allowed to settle in Astrakhan. He lived there for about six years and, finally, in June 1889 with the permission of the authorities he moved to his native town of Saratov.

V. G. Korolenko in his reminiscences on N. G. Chernyshevsky says: "The Poles with whom I met together and lived in Yakutsk Region made an interesting observation. One of them told me that almost all those who returned after the manifestoes straight to their homeland, having lived for many years in the cold Yakutian climate, died unexpectedly quickly. Therefore those who could tried to soften the transition by staying for a year or two or three in the southern parts of Siberia and the north-east of European Russia.

"Whether this is a true observation or these deaths are mere accidents, it was true in Chernyshevsky's case. From the cold of Yakutsk Chernyshevsky arrived in torrid Astrakhan a healthy man. My brother saw him there looking just as he does on his portrait. From Astrakhan he moved to Saratov as we saw him, hunched, with a sallow complexion and a serious blood disease which was already taking him to the grave."\*

He died in the same year, 1889, on the night of 16 October at 12:37. In the words of Mr. K. Fyodorov, who was his secretary in the last years of his life, "his burial took place on the fourth day after his death in the presence of a large crowd, after the funeral service in the Church of St. Sergius, in the Resurrection Cemetery, where his father, who died in the autumn of 1861 was also buried. On the day of the funeral, and after, a mass of wreaths was laid on the grave of the deceased, among which one wreath, or rather two joined together, stood out in particular—from the Russian and Polish students of Warsaw University and the Veterinary Institute".\*\*

An indefatigable worker, Chernyshevsky worked hard both during his imprisonment in the Fortress and in Siberia. In the Fortress he wrote his famous novel *What Is To Be Done?* and what has survived of his writings in Siberia fills a large volume

\* В. Короленко, «Отошедшие», Спб., изд. «Русского Богатства», 1908 г. стр. 75. [V. Korolenko, *Those Who Are Gone*, St. Petersburg, Russkoye Bogatstvo Publishers, 1908, p. 75.]

\*\* K. M. Fyodorov, *N. G. Chernyshevsky*, pp. 67-68.

of 757 pages.\* How hard he worked on his return from Siberia can be seen, inter alia, from the reminiscences of Mr. K. Fyodorov. "Chernyshevsky worked a great deal," he says, "particularly in the last three years before his death. The day usually began as follows: at 7 o'clock he was already up, drinking tea and at the same time either proof-reading or looking over the original of a translation, then from 8 o'clock until 1 o'clock he translated, dictating to his 'writing machine', as he called me jokingly for my fast writing under dictation. At 1 o'clock we, that is, Mr. and Mrs. Chernyshevsky and I, had dinner. Suffering from his old ailment—catarrh of the stomach, he ate very little during dinner and partook only of milk and a thin gruel. After dinner, which lasted no more than 30 or 40 minutes, Chernyshevsky read newspapers and journals, and from three o'clock to 6 o'clock, that is, until evening tea, the work continued. And if the 'writing machine', i.e., myself, and the 'dictating machine' (Chernyshevsky) were not tired, the sessions sometimes went on long after midnight. In particular this almost always happened before the completion of the translation of each volume of Weber's history."\*\*\*

Between 1885 and 1889 Chernyshevsky managed to translate eleven volumes of Weber's *Universal History*, and he made some interesting supplements to some of the volumes. We shall examine them in due course, as also the two articles which he wrote during the same period and published—one in *Russkiye Vedomosti* (1885) and the other in *Russkaya Mysl* (1888).<sup>88</sup> For the time being, however, we would like to say a few words about his fictional works.

During the investigation of his case N. G. Chernyshevsky wrote in an attempt to disprove the arguments of his accusers who cited papers which had been confiscated from him:

"I had long been preparing to become a writer of fiction too, incidentally. But I am of the belief that people of my character should not engage in fiction in the years of their youth—success will not come to them early. Were it not for the financial necessity, arising from the cessation of my publicistic activity by my arrest, I would not have published a novel at the age of 35 either. Rousseau waited until old age. Godwin also.<sup>89</sup> The novel is something intended for the mass of the public; it is the most serious of literary occupations, and the most suited to old age. The simplicity of the form should be compensated for by the seriousness of the thoughts which are being instilled in the masses. Thus, I prepared material for the elderly period of my life."\*\*\*

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\* See *Collected Works*, Vol. X, Part 1.

\*\* K. M. Fyodorov, *N. G. Chernyshevsky*, pp. 58-59.

\*\*\* M. K. Lemke, "The Case of N. G. Chernyshevsky", *Byloye*, 1906, May, p. 105.

We have already remarked that a person in Chernyshevsky's position at that time had every right not to be frank and that consequently great circumspection is required in the use of his testimony as material for his biography. But the fact that he had long been preparing himself to become a writer of fiction may be believed, particularly as he had before him the example of Lessing whose activity served him as the ideal of literary activity. And it did, in fact, turn out that our author did not take up fiction until quite late. But once he had taken it up, he applied himself to it, as we can see, most diligently. The afore-mentioned Part 1 of Volume X of his *Works* consists primarily of fiction; it even contains poetry, for example, the "Hymn to the Maid of the Skies" which first appeared in *Russkaya Mysl*, in No. 7 for 1885. In a letter to A. N. Pypin (undated, with the following note written by Pypin: "received in July 1870") Chernyshevsky wrote on the subject of his works of fiction that he had "written a great deal", and added: "I have talent, definitely. Probably a lot."\* This latter remark should, of course, be attributed to N. G. Chernyshevsky's habit of making fun of himself. But even in exile he would not have wasted his time writing works of fiction had he considered himself quite incapable of doing so. He probably regarded these works of his as possessing certain merits, but above all he hoped to exert through them a beneficial influence on the readers. It must be admitted that, with the exception of the novel *Prologue* which is interesting because it is something in the nature of reminiscences attired in fictional form, his Siberian fiction was not successful. It is unlikely to find many readers. Rationality—that distinctive feature of the "enlightener", which was characteristic of our author even in childhood—reaches the very extreme here and not only deprives the characters of all signs of "real life", but even affects their language, which is the same in all of them and very heavy in all of them because of their indomitable propensity for detailed analysis and equally detailed explanation to their collocutor of each of their actions and each movement of their soul: they do not live, but keep on explaining why they want to live in such a way, and no other. If, in embarking upon his Siberian fictional works, Chernyshevsky set himself the aim of propaganda, this aim will, surely, remain unattained.\*\*

The novel *What Is To Be Done?*, written in the Fortress, was of completely different significance. It was destined to become a tremendous success, and it had a truly colossal and extremely beneficial influence on young readers of the seventies and eighties. Our obscurantists and decadents were accustomed to shrug their shoulders contemptuously about this famous work because of the

\* *Works*, Vol. X, Part 1, p. 28.

\*\* We would reiterate that this judgment does not extend to the novel *Prologue*.

alleged complete absence in it of artistic merit. But it is interesting that even in this respect their sentence is not entirely just: the character of Maria Alexeyevna Rozalskaya, the mother of Vera Pavlovna, is drawn rather well. Moreover, the novel in general contains a great deal of acute observation, humour and that genuine fervour, or rather, enthusiasm, which grips the reader and makes him follow the fate of the main characters with unfaltering interest in spite of the undoubted weakness of the author's artistic powers. It is obviously easy to pass withering judgment on the novel *What Is To Be Done?* by comparing it with, say, *Anna Karenina*. But the critic who compares two entirely incommensurable literary works is a bad one. It would be more appropriate to compare the novel *What Is To Be Done?* with, for example, this or that philosophical novel by Voltaire. And if we approach it with such a criterion, we see at once how wrongly those strict judges, the obscurantists and decadents, were in their judgment of it.

What is the secret of the extraordinary success of *What Is To Be Done?* It is the same as is generally responsible for the success of literary works, the fact that this novel gave a living and universally understood answer to questions in which a considerable section of the reading public was keenly interested. In themselves, the ideas expressed in it were not new: Chernyshevsky had taken them wholly from West-European literature. In France, George Sand had much earlier advocated free and, most important, sincere and honest relations in the love of a man for a woman.\* As regards the moral demands she puts on love, Lucrezia Floriani differs in no way from Vera Pavlovna Lopukhova-Kirsanova. And as for the novel *Jacques*, it would be simple to copy out a fairly large number of passages from it to show that in the novel *What Is To Be Done?* the thoughts and reasonings of George Sand's freedom-loving, selfless hero are at times reproduced almost in their entirety.\*\* And George Sand was not the only one to advocate

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\* Let us note in passing that Goethe's *Wahlverwandschaften* also represents a word in defence of such relations. This is well understood by some German historians of German literature who, while not daring to decry such an authoritative writer, and at the same time not daring to agree with him because of their own philistine virtuousness, usually mutter something totally unintelligible about the apparently strange paradoxes of the great German.

\*\* On March 26, 1853, Chernyshevsky recorded in his diary the following conversation with his fiancée: "Can you possibly think that I will deceive you?" "I don't think that, I don't expect it, but I have considered such an event too." "What would you do then?" "I told her of George Sand's *Jacques*. 'Then you, too, would shoot yourself?' 'I don't think so'; and I told her I would try to obtain George Sand for her (she had not read it, or at any rate does not remember the ideas in it)" (*Works*, Vol. X, Part 2, Section 3, p. 78). We consider that it is not superfluous to note another passage from Chernyshevsky's conversations with his fiancée: "But what these relations would be like—the day before yesterday she said: 'We would have separate halves of the house and you ought not to come to me without permission';

freedom in relations of this kind. It is well known that they were also advocated by Robert Owen and Fourier, who had a decisive influence on Chernyshevsky's outlook.\* And as early as the forties all these ideas met with warm sympathy in our country. In his articles Belinsky often called passionately for freedom and sincerity in relations of love. The reader will recall, of course, how bitterly the "impetuous Vissarion" reproached Pushkin's Tatyana because, while loving Onegin, she did not follow the dictates of her heart and, being given to "another", continued to live with her aged husband whom she did not love. In their attitude to women, the best people of the "forties" adhered to the same principles as those of Lopukhov and Kirsanov. However, prior to the appearance of the novel *What Is To Be Done?*, these principles were shared only by a "select" handful; the mass of the reading public did not understand them at all. Even Herzen hesitated to expound them fully and clearly in his novel *Who Is To Blame?* A. Druzhinin handles the question more resolutely in his story *Polenka Saks*.\*\* But this story is too colourless, and its characters, belonging to so-called high society—officials and titled personages—did not at all appeal to the "raznochintsi", who, after the fall of Nicholas' regime, formed the left wing of the reading public. With the appearance of *What Is To Be Done?* everything changed, everything became clear, precise and definite. There was no more room left for doubt. Thinking people were faced with the alternative of being guided in love by the principles of Lopukhov and Kirsanov, or of bowing to the sanctity of marriage and resorting, should a new sentiment arise, to the old, tested method of secret amorous adventures, or else completely subduing all affection in their hearts in view of the fact that they *belonged* to a marriage partner, whom they no longer loved. And the choice had to be made quite consciously. Chernyshevsky dealt with the issue in such a way that what had been natural instinctiveness and sincerity in love became utterly impossible. Mind control extended to love, and the general public adopted a conscious view of the relations between man and woman. This was particularly important in our

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I would have liked to arrange things that way myself, perhaps I think more seriously about it than she does;—she probably only means that she doesn't want me to bore her, while I understand it to mean that in general every husband should be extremely considerate to his wife in his matrimonial relations" (ibid., p. 82). Almost literally the same conversation takes place between Vera Pavlovna and Lopukhov in the novel *What Is To Be Done?*

\* It seems hardly necessary to recall what an energetic advocate Robert Owen was in this respect. As for Fourier, we quote here his very profound words: "les coutumes en amour ... ne sont que formes temporaires et variables, et non pas fond immuable" (*Oeuvres complètes de Ch. Fourier*, t. IV, p. 84) ["customs in love ... are only temporary and variable forms, and not immutable substance"].

\*\* *Sovremennik*, 1847, No. 12.



country in the sixties. The reforms which Russia had undergone turned upside down both our social and family relations. A ray of light reached into recesses that had been in complete darkness. Russian people were compelled to examine themselves, to take a sober view of their relation to their kin, to society and family. A new element came to play a big role in family relations, in love and friendship—*convictions*, which formerly only the very smallest handful of "idealists" had possessed. Differences of conviction led to unexpected ruptures. A woman "given in marriage" to a certain man often discovered with horror that her lawful "possessor" was an obscurantist, a bribe-taker, a flatterer grovelling before his superiors. A man who had enjoyed the "possession" of his beautiful wife, and was unexpectedly affected by the current of new ideas, often realised in dismay that what his charming plaything was interested in was not at all the "new people" or the "new views", but new dresses and dances, and also the title and salary of her husband. All explanations and exhortations are in vain, the beautiful woman turns into a veritable shrew as soon as her husband tries to say that he "would gladly be of service", but that "servility is nauseating". How is one to act? What is one to do? The famous novel showed how to act and what to do. Under its influence people who had previously regarded themselves as the legal property of others began to repeat with its author: O, filth, O, filth, he who dares to possess another!—and there awoke in them an awareness of human dignity, and, often after the bitterest spiritual and family storms, they became independent, organised their life in keeping with their convictions and consciously progressed towards a rational human goal. In view of this alone it can be said that the name of Chernyshevsky belongs to history, and it will still be dear to people, who will recall it with gratitude when those who were personally acquainted with *the great Russian enlightener* are no more.

Obscurantists accused Chernyshevsky of preaching the "*emancipation of the flesh*" in his novel. Nothing could be more absurd and hypocritical than this accusation! Take any novel about high society life, recall the amorous intrigues of the nobility and bourgeoisie in all countries and among all peoples—and you will see that Chernyshevsky had no need whatsoever to preach the emancipation of the flesh, which had long been an established fact. On the contrary, his novel preaches the *emancipation of the human spirit, the human intellect*. No one influenced by the trend of this novel would have any desire for the boudoir adventures without which life was empty for "society" people, who had a hypocritical respect for conventional morality. Messrs. the obscurantists understand perfectly the strictly moral nature of Chernyshevsky's work and are annoyed with him precisely because of his moral strictness. They sense that people like the heroes of *What Is To*

*Be Done?* must regard them as totally debauched and must feel the utmost contempt for them.

As we know, the dissemination in Russia of the great ideas of truth, science, and art was the main, one might say, the only aim of our author's life. It was in the interests of this dissemination that he wrote the novel *What Is To Be Done?* It would be wrong to regard this novel merely as the preaching of rational relations in love. The love of Vera Pavlovna for Lopukhov and Kirsanov is only the canvas on which other, more important ideas of the author's are set. In Vera Pavlovna's dreams the author's socialist ideals are painted in bright colours. The picture of socialist society drawn by him is modelled entirely on Fourier. Chernyshevsky does not offer the reader anything new. He merely acquaints him with conclusions which West-European thought reached long ago. Here again it must be mentioned that Fourier's views were known in Russia even in the forties. The "Petrashevtsi" were accused and found guilty of Fourierism. But Chernyshevsky spread Fourier's ideas on a previously unprecedented scale. He introduced them to the public at large. Later, even Chernyshevsky's admirers in our country would shrug their shoulders in talking of Vera Pavlovna's dreams. The phalansteries of which she dreamed seemed rather naive to some later. It was said that the famous writer could have talked to the reader about something nearer to our hearts and more practical. Even people who called themselves socialists reasoned thus. We must confess that we regard this matter quite differently. In Vera Pavlovna's dreams we see a feature of Chernyshevsky's socialist views to which, unfortunately, Russian socialists have still not paid sufficient attention. In these dreams we are attracted by Chernyshevsky's full realisation of the fact that the socialist system must be based on the widespread application to production of the technical forces developed by the bourgeois period. In Vera Pavlovna's dreams huge armies of labour are jointly engaged in production, passing from Central Asia to Russia, from hot climate countries to the cold countries. All this, of course, could have been conceived with the aid of Fourier as well, but it is evident even from the subsequent history of so-called Russian socialism that the Russian reading public was not aware of this. In their ideas of socialist society our revolutionaries frequently went so far as to conceive it in the form of a federation of peasant communes, cultivating their fields with the same antiquated plough as that used to scrape the soil in the time of Basil the Blind. But obviously such "socialism" cannot be regarded as socialism. The emancipation of the proletariat can come about only through the emancipation of man from the "power of the land" and nature in general. And this emancipation has made absolutely indispensable those armies of labour and that extensive application of modern productive forces to production of which Chernyshevsky spoke in

Vera Pavlovna's dreams and which we have completely forgotten in our desire to be "practical".

Chernyshevsky was present at the birth of the new type of "new people" in our country. He has drawn this type in the character of Rakhmetov. Our author joyfully welcomed the emergence of this new type and could not deny himself the pleasure of depicting at least a vague profile of him. At the same time, he foresaw with sorrow how many trials and sufferings were in store for the Russian revolutionary, whose life must be one of severe struggle and great self-sacrifice. And so, in Rakhmetov, Chernyshevsky presents us with the true ascetic. Rakhmetov positively tortures himself. He is completely "merciless towards himself", as his landlady says. He even decides to test whether he can endure torture by spending a whole night lying on a length of felt with nails sticking through it. Many people, including Pisarev, regarded this as mere eccentricity. We agree that some aspects of Rakhmetov's character could have been drawn differently. But the character as a whole nevertheless remains completely true to life. Almost all of our prominent socialists of the sixties and seventies possessed no small share of the Rakhmetov spirit.

We should like to say in closing our Introduction that Chernyshevsky's significance in Russian literature has yet to be appraised properly. How much he is misunderstood in our country even by many of those who think very well of him can be seen from V. G. Korolenko's reminiscences of him. This gifted and intelligent author portrays him as a sort of "rationalistic economist" who, moreover, believes "in the power of Comte's organising reason".\* If the words about "organising reason" mean anything at all, it is that Chernyshevsky regarded social phenomena from an idealistic standpoint, from which they were considered by Comte himself. But he who looks on social phenomena from an *idealistic* standpoint cannot be called an *economist* for the simple reason that this name is applied, even if not very properly, to those who, while not believing in the power of organising reason, do believe in the organising power of economics. An "economist" who believed in the power of organising reason would be like a Darwinist who accepted the cosmogony of Moses. But this is not the most important thing here. What is most important is the fact that Mr. Korolenko counterposes the sociological views of our "subjectivists" to the "economism" of Chernyshevsky. "We, too, did not stand still when we ceased to be 'rational economists'. Instead of purely economic patterns, the literary trend, represented chiefly by N. K. Mikhailovsky, has opened to us a veritable vista of laws and parallels of a biological character, while the play of economic interests was assigned a subordinate role."\*\*

\* Korolenko, *Those Who Are Gone*, p. 78.

\*\* Ibid., pp. 79-80.

"*Did not stand still*", indeed! The "vista of laws and parallels of a biological character", revealed by Mikhailovsky, *was an enormous step backwards* in comparison with Chernyshevsky's social views.\* N. K. Mikhailovsky was a disciple of P. L. Lavrov, whose views on the course of social development corresponded to those of Bruno Bauer, as we have shown in the book *The Development of the Monist View of History*.<sup>90</sup> Hence whoever would like to understand the relation between N. G. Chernyshevsky's world outlook and that of our "subjectivists" should first of all try to understand the relation between Feuerbach's philosophy, to which Chernyshevsky adhered, and Bruno Bauer's views. And this is clear and simple: Feuerbach is far ahead of Bruno Bauer.

As an epigraph to our first article on Chernyshevsky, written while the news of his death was still fresh in mind, and completely revised in the present edition, we have taken the following words from our author's letter to his wife: "My life and yours belong to history; hundreds of years will pass and our names will still be dear to people, who will recall them with gratitude when those who lived with us are no more." This letter was written on October 5, 1862, i.e., when the author was already imprisoned. His accusers quoted it later as evidence of his extreme conceit. He objected that they were taking seriously lines in his letter, which he had not written seriously at all.\*\*

We, for our part, leave aside altogether the question of whether conceit comes under any clause of any criminal code. And we are quite sure that the lines from Chernyshevsky's letter quoted by us signified a simple joke *for their author*. But we believe that now they have another, completely serious meaning. N. G. Chernyshevsky's life does indeed belong to history, and his name will not cease to be recalled with gratitude by all those who are interested in the destiny of Russian literature and who are able to appreciate intellect, talent, knowledge, courage and selflessness.

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\* No wonder Chernyshevsky's attitude to those "laws and parallels" was entirely negative, according to the self-same Mr. Korolenko.

\*\* M. K. Lemke, *Byloye*, 1906, p. 103.

**PART ONE**  
**N. G. CHERNYSHEVSKY'S**  
**PHILOSOPHICAL, HISTORICAL**  
**AND**  
**LITERARY VIEWS**

**SECTION ONE**

**N. G. CHERNYSHEVSKY'S PHILOSOPHICAL VIEWS**

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*Chapter One*

**Chernyshevsky and Feuerbach**

In the first edition of this work, the first article of which dealing, inter alia, with Chernyshevsky's philosophical views was written in late 1889, we expressed the conviction that in his philosophical views our author was a follower of Feuerbach. Naturally, this conviction was based primarily on a comparison with Feuerbach's views of those ideas of Chernyshevsky's which had a more or less direct bearing on philosophy. We were able to base ourselves also on the actual testimony of our author. True, in keeping with the censorship conditions of that time, Chernyshevsky always referred to this subject in hints alone; but to anyone who understood the matter his hints were as clear as daylight. Thus, for example, in the dispute with Dudyshkin (in the article "Polemical Gems") Chernyshevsky says that he supports a philosophical system which "is the latest link in a series of philosophical systems" and which "emerged from Hegel's system, just as the latter emerged from Schelling's". It was not difficult to guess that these words alluded to Feuerbach. But Chernyshevsky did not count upon the quick-wittedness of his opponent and therefore wanted to make his allusion even more transparent. "But perhaps the matter is still unclear to you," he asks, "and probably you would like to know who this teacher is that I am talking about? To help you in your inquiries I will tell you that he is not a Russian, not a Frenchman or an Englishman, not Büchner, not Max Stirner, not Bruno Bauer, not Moleschott, not Vogt. Who is it then? You begin to guess. 'It must be Schopenhauer!' you exclaim, after reading Mr. Lavrov's essays. The very man; you have guessed right." These lines left no doubt whatever that Chernyshevsky regarded Feuerbach as his teacher in philosophy.

In one of our articles devoted to the "fate of our criticism" we argue that Chernyshevsky's famous dissertation "The Aesthetic Relation of Art to Reality" is an interesting attempt and the only one of its kind to construct aesthetics on the basis of Feuerbach's

materialist philosophy.\* It was hard for anyone with an idea of Feuerbach's philosophy not to agree with this too. But, firstly, in our country there are extremely few people with an idea of this philosophy and, secondly, no matter how sound our argument on the kinship of Chernyshevsky's philosophical views with the philosophical views of the author of *The Essence of Christianity*, this argument was not at that time based on a single piece of direct, undisguised evidence from Chernyshevsky himself. We now possess such evidence and hasten to draw the reader's attention to it.

In the preface to the third edition of "The Aesthetic Relation of Art to Reality",\*\* mentioned above, Chernyshevsky says:

"The author of the pamphlet, to the third edition of which I am writing this preface [i.e., N. G. Chernyshevsky himself.—G. P.], obtained the opportunity to use a good library and to spend a little money on purchasing books in 1846. Until then he had read only such books as can be obtained in provincial towns where there are no decent libraries. He was familiar with the Russian expositions of Hegel's system, which are very incomplete. When he obtained the opportunity to read Hegel in the original he began to read these treatises. He liked Hegel in the original far less than he had been led to expect by the Russian expositions. The reason for this was that the Russian followers of Hegel expounded his system from the standpoint of the Left wing of the Hegelian school. In the original, Hegel proved to resemble the philosophers of the seventeenth century, and even the scholastics more than the Hegel who appeared in the Russian expositions of his system. Reading him was wearisome, because it was obviously of no use for forming a scientific mode of thought. It was at that time that the youth who wanted to form such a mode of thought for himself accidentally came across one of the principal works of Feuerbach. He became a follower of that thinker; and until mundane cares diverted him from scientific studies, he zealously read and reread the works of Feuerbach."

This passage, which constitutes, as it were, the philosophical curriculum vitae of N. G. Chernyshevsky, shows us how important German philosophy in general and Feuerbach's philosophy in particular was in the history of the development of his world outlook. And the lines which immediately follow it reveal the influence of Feuerbach on our author's aesthetic views.

\* This article was intended for the *Novoye Slovo*, but "because of circumstances beyond the editors' control" only half of it was printed. It appeared in full in 1905 in my symposium *Twenty Years* and was reprinted in subsequent editions.<sup>91</sup>

\*\* The publisher of his father's works, M. N. Chernyshevsky, states: "This preface was not passed by the censor, since it was not permitted to write about Feuerbach. It was therefore decided not to print the third edition of 'The Aesthetic Relation'." The preface is dated 1888.

Chernyshevsky continues, speaking of himself in the third person as before:

"About six years after he had made the acquaintance of Feuerbach, the mundane necessity arose for him to write a scientific treatise. It seemed to him that he could apply the fundamental ideas of Feuerbach to the solution of certain problems in branches of knowledge that had not come within the scope of his teacher's researches.

"The subject of the treatise he was to write had to be something dealing with literature. It occurred to him to meet this condition by expounding conceptions of art, and of poetry in particular, which seemed to him to be deductions from Feuerbach's ideas. Thus, the pamphlet to which I am writing this preface is an attempt to apply Feuerbach's ideas to the solution of the fundamental problems of aesthetics.

"The author made no claim whatever to saying anything new of his own. He wished merely to interpret Feuerbach's ideas in application to aesthetics."\*

The reader can see that we interpreted Chernyshevsky's attitude to Feuerbach correctly. But what is the viewpoint of Feuerbach himself? We referred to him above as a materialist. He was also considered a materialist by those people in our country who took up arms against Chernyshevsky for his propagation of Feuerbach's philosophical views. But today the opinion is very widespread in philosophical literature that Feuerbach was never a "true" materialist. This opinion, which is based on certain "aphorisms" and terms of Feuerbach himself, was, incidentally, also expressed in Lange's well-known *History of Materialism*.<sup>92</sup> It is, however, completely invalid, as we shall now see.

In his *Grundsätze*\*\* Feuerbach says: "*The new [i.e., his.—G.P.] philosophy makes man, including nature as the basis of man, the only universal and the highest subject of philosophy—accordingly, it makes anthropology, including physiology, a universal science.*"

In these words of Feuerbach's Lange sees a feature which proceeds from Hegelian philosophy and sets Feuerbach apart from materialists in the true sense of the word. He remarks that "for the materialist the nature of man is only a particular case in the chain of physical life processes". What is more, in Lange's opinion, the true materialist is little inclined to ascribe—as Feuerbach does—divine attributes to human nature.\*\*\* But what do these divine attributes mean according to Feuerbach? He himself says

\* *Works*, Vol. X, Part 2, p. 192.

\*\* [*Grundsätze der Philosophie der Zukunft*.]

\*\*\* «История материализма». Russian translation by N. N. Strakhov, Vol. II, p. 82. [Plekhanov is quoting from the Russian translation of F. Lange's *Geschichte des Materialismus und Kritik seiner Bedeutung in der Gegenwart*.]

that his "anthropology" merely means that man takes for God that which is his own essence.\* In view of this the "divine nature" of the attributes of human nature loses all spiritualistic meaning: all that remains is a certain misuse of the term, which is most undesirable in the interests of the proper development of philosophical concepts, but which does not change the true content of Feuerbach's teaching in the slightest. Feuerbach never denied that human nature "is only a particular case in the chain of the physical processes". This proposition lies at the basis of all his philosophy. And if nevertheless he considered it necessary to take human nature as his point of departure, this is brilliantly explained by his own words: "...In this dispute [between materialism and spiritualism] it is a question of the human head.... Once we have found out what ... the matter of the brain is, we shall soon find out about all other matter also, about matter in general."\*\* These lines show how little Feuerbach was understood by those who refused to regard his teaching as materialism and christened it with the name of *humanism*, which says nothing at all. True, Feuerbach himself occasionally refused to regard himself as a materialist. "Materialism," he says, "is an entirely unsuitable name which leads to incorrect conceptions and can be justified only in so far as the materiality of thought is counterposed to the immateriality of thought... But for us there exists only an organic life, organic action, organic thinking. Therefore *organism* is the right expression, for the consistent spiritualist denies that thinking requires an organ, whereas the natural viewpoint holds that there is no activity without an organ."\*\*\* In the same aphorisms from which we have taken these lines, Feuerbach announces that he goes along with the materialists to a certain point only and that materialism is only the basis of human essence and human knowledge, but not knowledge itself, as certain naturalists think, for example, Moleschott. But here it must be remarked that in fact the term "organism", suggested by Feuerbach, expresses precisely the same philosophical view as the word "*materialism*". Naturalists "in the narrow sense of the word" did not satisfy Feuerbach because, in his opinion, they reduced everything to the brain, and "the brain is no more than a physiological abstraction; it is the organ of thinking only as long as it is connected with the human head and body".\*\*\*\* But has any naturalist ever denied that the brain ceases to think when it is separated from the head and the body? No. In this case Feuerbach is simply being

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\* *Feuerbach's Werke*, VI, 249.

\*\* "Ueber Spiritualismus und Materialismus", *Werke*, X, 129.

\*\*\* "Nachgelassene Aphorismen", printed in Grün's *Ludwig Feuerbach in seinem Briefwechsel und Nachlass*, Zweiter Band, S. 307-08.

\*\*\*\* *Werke*, II, 362.



unfair to naturalists.\* It cannot be denied that in the person of such naturalists as Moleschott, Büchner and Vogt, materialism has occasionally suffered from considerable narrowness and made serious theoretical mistakes. But it would be wrong to attribute to materialism in general the shortcomings characteristic of one of its schools. This was evidently understood by Feuerbach himself, who in his work *Ueber Spiritualismus und Materialismus besonders in Beziehung auf die Willensfreiheit* attributes what he regarded as the weak side of materialism to the French materialist school, counterposing it to German materialism which enjoyed his full sympathy. In reality the criticisms which he made there of the French school of materialism are entirely undeserved by the latter and could be levelled with far more justification at German materialists such as Büchner or Vogt. But this is a detail, explained by the fact that Feuerbach, brought up on German philosophy, was ill-acquainted with French materialism. This detail did not prevent Feuerbach from adopting a purely materialist viewpoint in his "anthropology". In the work just quoted by us, *Ueber Spiritualismus und Materialismus*, he writes, without realising it, in the spirit of French materialism as the latter was expressed in the works of La Mettrie and Diderot.\*\*

## Chapter Two

### "The Anthropological Principle in Philosophy"

Be that as it may, N. G. Chernyshevsky understood Feuerbach in the *materialist* sense. His famous philosophical article, which appeared in Nos. 4-5 of the *Sovremennik* for 1860, leaves no doubt on this count. Here he explains as follows the meaning of the title of his article: "*The Anthropological Principle in Philosophy*". "It is that a man must be regarded as a single being having only one nature; that a human life must not be cut into two halves, each belonging to a different nature; that every aspect of a man's activity must be regarded as the activity of his whole organism, from head to foot inclusively, or if it is the special function of some particular organ of the human organism we are dealing with, that organ must be regarded in its natural connection with the entire organism."

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\* An idea of how this question is regarded in modern natural science is given by the short but interesting work of Felix Le Dantec *Le déterminisme biologique et la personnalité consciente. Esquisse d'une théorie chimique des épiphénomènes*.

\*\* For more about this see our article in the symposium *Twenty Years* ("Chernyshevsky's Aesthetic Theory") and our brochure *Fundamental Problems of Marxism*, pp. 1-25.<sup>93</sup>

Explaining the anthropological principle, one might say, with the words of Feuerbach himself, Chernyshevsky remarks that the majority of thinkers engaged in the moral sciences still continue to work "according to the old fantastic method of unnaturally cutting man into halves, each purported to spring from different natures". But precisely because most scientists have not yet realised the importance of the anthropological principle, their work lacks any serious significance. "Their neglect of the anthropological principle deprives them of all merit. The only exceptions are the works of a very few of the old thinkers who followed the anthropological principle, although they did not yet employ the term to characterise their conceptions of man. Such, for example, were Aristotle and Spinoza."

People who hold the vulgar view of the essence of the materialist doctrine are bound to find this remark by our author concerning Aristotle and Spinoza quite unexpected and even ridiculous. In the mid-nineties of the last century Mr. A. Volynsky in his book *Russian Critics* pronounced the following solemn sentence on this remark: "Of all the thinkers of the past Chernyshevsky, due to some strange association of ideas and, undoubtedly, mistaken recollections, is prepared to acknowledge only Aristotle and Spinoza. In his fantastic conception of the systems of these two truly great creators in the realm of human thought he assumes that, in following the anthropological principle described above, he is their successor given the new data of positive knowledge" (p. 271).

This solemn remark on the allegedly fantastic conceptions of Chernyshevsky merely testifies to the fact that Mr. A. Volynsky understood nothing whatsoever in the philosophical views of N. G. Chernyshevsky.

We already know that the latter adopted the viewpoint of Feuerbach. How did Feuerbach regard Spinoza? In his history of the new philosophy he expounded Spinoza's teaching with the greatest sympathy, but in his *Grundsätze*, written in 1843, he expressed the quite correct idea that Spinoza's pantheism is theological materialism, i.e., a rejection of theology which continues to adopt a theological viewpoint. In Feuerbach's opinion, this confusion of materialism and theology constituted Spinoza's inconsistency, which, however, did not prevent him from providing "a correct—at least for his time—philosophical expression for the materialist trend of modern times". Therefore Feuerbach called Spinoza the Moses of the modern free thinkers and materialists.\*

After this it is understandable why Chernyshevsky regarded Spinoza as one of the very few earlier thinkers who adhered to the

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\* *Werke*, II, 291. For more about this see *Fundamental Problems of Marxism*, pp. 9-13.<sup>94</sup>

anthropological principle, although they did not yet employ this term to describe their philosophical views: in acting thus, he was following the example of his teacher who rightly regarded Spinoza as the Moses of modern materialism. As for Aristotle, Chernyshevsky was indeed wrong in regarding his philosophy as akin to the teaching of Feuerbach. Aristotle was far closer to the idealists than to the materialists, but here again it must not be forgotten that among Aristotle's disciples were those who interpreted his system in a sense which was very close to materialism.\* Such as Aristoxenus, Dicaearchus and particularly Strato. Chernyshevsky probably regarded their interpretation of Aristotle's philosophy as correct and therefore proclaimed their teacher to be an adherent of the anthropological principle. We repeat, this opinion cannot be considered correct; but it would take all the philosophical ignorance of Mr. Volynsky to see it as proof of the fact that Chernyshevsky knew nothing about philosophy.\*\*

Thus, at the basis of Chernyshevsky's philosophy lies the idea of the unity of the human organism. Chernyshevsky is a confirmed opponent of all dualism. According to him, philosophy—i.e., the philosophy of Feuerbach which he expounded and defended—sees in the human organism that which the natural sciences see in it. "These sciences prove," he says, "that no dualism is evident in man, and philosophy adds that if man possessed another nature, in addition to his real nature, this other nature would inevitably reveal itself in some way, but since it does not reveal itself in any way, since everything that takes place and manifests itself in man originates solely from his real nature, he cannot have another nature." But the unity of human nature does not prevent the existence within the human organism of two different types of phenomena: phenomena of what is called a material order and phenomena of what is called a moral order. And Chernyshevsky is faced with the question: in what relation do these two orders of phenomena stand to one another? Does not their existence contradict the unity of man's nature? Chernyshevsky replies categorically that it does not: "There are no grounds for such a hypothesis, for there is no object that possesses only one quality. On the contrary, every object displays an incalculable number of different phenomena which, for convenience, we place in different cate-

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\* On this see Ed. Zeller, *Die Philosophie der Griechen in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung*, II. Th., II. Abtheilung, II. Auflage, Tübingen, 1862, S. 717, 719-20, 732, 742. Cf. also Ueberweg, *Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie*, I. Theil, Berlin, 1876, S. 218-19.

\*\* The fact that in the sixties of the last century Chernyshevsky was not alone in his tendency to belittle the importance of the idealist element in Aristotle's philosophy is shown by A. Le Blais' book of considerable interest, *Matérialisme et Spiritualisme*, in the series *Bibliothèque de philosophie contemporaine* with a preface by Littré (see pp. 48-54). This book was published in 1865.

gories, calling each category a quality, so that every object has numerous qualities of different kinds." Here again the complete unity of his philosophical views with the views of Feuerbach is revealed. We know that, according to the latter's teaching, the being is the subject, and thinking a quality ("predicate") of this subject, so that it is not the abstract being once used by idealist philosophy that thinks, but a real being, the *body*. But what is the human organism? It is "an extremely complex chemical combination", answers Chernyshevsky, "that goes through an extremely complex chemical process that we call life". Some parts of this process have still not been properly explained. But from this it certainly does not follow, to quote Chernyshevsky, "that we have not already positively learned a great deal about those parts, the investigation of which is at present in a very imperfect state". The knowledge of certain aspects of the vital process enables us to draw at least negative deductions concerning those aspects which have still been poorly studied. Such negative deductions are, according to Chernyshevsky, of great importance in all sciences; but they are particularly important in the moral sciences and in metaphysics, because there they eliminate many harmful errors. In order to explain this important idea, we shall call upon Chernyshevsky himself to speak. "It is said that the natural sciences have not reached such a degree of development as to provide a satisfactory explanation of all the important phenomena of nature. This is quite true; but the opponents of the scientific trend in philosophy draw from this truth a totally illogical deduction when they say that the gaps left in the scientific explanation of natural phenomena justify the preservation of certain remnants of the fantastic world outlook. The fact is that the results achieved by analysis of the parts and phenomena that have been explained by science are sufficient evidence of the character of the elements, forces and laws that operate in the other parts and phenomena which have not yet been fully explained. If there were anything in the unexplained parts and phenomena different from what has been found in the explained parts, then the explained parts would not bear the character they bear now."

This argument is again directed against dualism. No matter how little the so-called psychic phenomena have been studied, we can already say with certainty that the thinkers who attributed them to a special substance were mistaken. Such a substance does not exist. The psychic phenomena are no more than the result of the activity of the human organism. This is the proposition which runs through the whole of Chernyshevsky's article.

The following reservation should be made here, however. In Chernyshevsky's article there is a passage which could give—and has in fact given—grounds for misunderstanding. It is this passage: "We know, for example, what nutrition is. From this

we already know approximately what, for example, sensation is: nutrition and sensation are so closely interconnected that the character of one determines the character of the other." Reading these lines one might perhaps think that Chernyshevsky shared the view of those self-styled materialists who maintained that thought, and consequently, sensation also are nothing more than the motion of matter. But in fact he, like Feuerbach, was very far from *this sort of materialism*. His materialist view is best expressed in Feuerbach's words "That which to me, or subjectively, is a purely spiritual, non-material and non-sensuous act is in itself an objective, material and sensuous act."\* So that the reader should not suspect us of the intention to ascribe to Chernyshevsky views which he did not hold, we would quote the following words of Chernyshevsky himself: "By its very nature, sensation necessarily presupposes the existence of two elements of thought, merged into one thought. Firstly, there is the external object, which creates the sensation. Secondly, the being that is conscious of the sensation." Let us consider these words carefully. The being that is conscious of the sensation is a material being, an organism that is experiencing the action of an external object upon itself. This action consists of this or that part of the organism somehow or other being set in motion. This motion of certain parts of the organism *arouses* a certain sensation, but it is *not identical* with the sensation: it is merely the *objective aspect* of the phenomenon which *from the subjective aspect, i.e., to the being in which this process of motion is taking place*, seems like a sensation. In Chernyshevsky, as in Feuerbach, these two aspects of the phenomenon, the subjective and the objective, are very closely interconnected; but they are not identified with one another. On the contrary, Chernyshevsky like Feuerbach would have objected to such an identification, because he would rightly have seen in it an unconscious repetition of one of the fundamental mistakes of idealism—a vain attempt to resolve the antinomy between subject and object by the removal of one of its elements.\*\*

Below we shall see that Chernyshevsky's opponents who attacked him for the article "The Anthropological Principle in Philosophy" failed to understand his view on the relationship between subject and object. But for the moment we must confine ourselves to remarking that Chernyshevsky did not approve of the refusal, characteristic of the positivists, to examine the question of the mutual relation between matter and spirit. Thus, for example, he refuses to acknowledge J. S. Mill as "a representative of modern philosophy" because Mill never studied this question. "He deliberately refrains from expressing any opinion on these subjects,

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\* Werke, II, 350.

\*\* Cf. *Fundamental Problems of Marxism*, p. 9.<sup>95</sup>

as if he regarded them as being beyond the limits of exact investigation." The latter words show that, in Chernyshevsky's opinion, subjects of this kind were fully within the limits of investigation..

Let us proceed further. We know that Chernyshevsky regarded the human organism as "an extremely complex chemical combination that goes through an extremely complex chemical process that we call life". The complexity of this process is so great that the branch of chemistry which studies it has been made into a special science called physiology. But this fact by no means invalidates the idea that man is merely a part of nature. "The relation of physiology to chemistry," Chernyshevsky says, "may be compared with the relation of Russian history to world history. Of course, the history of Russia is only a part of world history, but the subject of this part concerns us particularly closely, and is therefore treated as if it were a special science. In educational establishments the history of Russia is dealt with as a special subject apart from world history, and at examinations students receive separate marks for it; but it must not be forgotten that this superficial division is made only for the sake of practical convenience and is not based on any theoretical difference between the character of this branch of science and all the other parts of this science. The history of Russia is intelligible only in connection with world history, it is explained by it and represents only a variety of the same forces and phenomena as are dealt with in world history. In the same way, physiology is only a variety of chemistry, and its subject is only a variety of the subjects dealt with in chemistry." To this it must be added that physiology does not confine itself to the study of the vital process which takes place in the human organism. The physiology of the human organism is merely a part of one of the departments of physiology—zoological physiology. There is no essential difference between a man and an animal from the viewpoint of the material processes of the organism, or even from the viewpoint of the so-called spiritual processes. "Truly scientific analysis reveals the fallacy of bare statements to the effect that animals totally lack different honourable qualities, such as, for example, some capacity for progress. Usually it is said: an animal remains all its life what it was when it was born; it learns nothing and makes no progress in mental development. This opinion is demolished by facts known to everybody: bears learn to dance and to perform all sorts of tricks; dogs learn to fetch and carry and to dance; elephants are even taught to walk the tightrope, and even fish are trained to assemble at the sound of a bell—all this is done by trained animals, they would not be able to do it if they were not trained; training gives them qualities they would not have otherwise. Animals are not only taught by man, they teach one another. It is known that birds of prey teach their young to fly." Not con-

sidering it necessary to enlarge on this question too much here, we would merely add, that in his article Chernyshevsky expressed many ideas in this connection which can be found in a book that came out considerably later, Darwin's *The Descent of Man*.

If the human organism is essentially no different from the organism of the animal, the latter in its turn does not differ essentially from the plant organism. Chernyshevsky says: "In its most developed forms, the animal organism differs very much from plants, but the reader knows that mammals and birds are connected with the vegetable kingdom by numerous transitional forms by which we can trace all the stages of development of so-called animal life from plant life. There are plants and animals that scarcely differ from one another, so that it is difficult to say in which kingdom each should be classed." Moreover, in the first period of their existence all animals are almost like plants in the first period of their growth. Chernyshevsky points out that in both animals and plants the "cell" serves as the embryo, and, after remarking that it is difficult to distinguish the embryo of an animal from the embryo of a plant, he continues: "Thus, we see that all animal organisms begin from the same thing that plants begin from, and only later do some animal organisms assume forms very different from those of plants and reveal to a very high degree qualities which in plants are so feeble that they can be discovered only with the aid of scientific instruments. For example, a tree contains the embryo of locomotion; its sap moves within it as in animals; its roots and branches stretch in all directions. True, this locomotion affects only its parts, the plant organism as a whole does not change its location; but nor does the polyp do so; its power of locomotion does not exceed that of a tree. But there are plants which do change their location: among these are several species of the *Mimosa* family."

We would not say that the ideas expressed by Chernyshevsky in this case were entirely new for their time: they can be found both in Hegel and particularly in certain natural philosophers of the Schelling school. Chernyshevsky knew German idealist philosophy; it is not surprising that these ideas too were known to him. But under his pen they became so liberated from all metaphysical admixtures, so tinged with the materialist hue of natural science, that the question naturally arises as to whether Chernyshevsky was already familiar at that time with the zoological theories of Lamarck and Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire. We find no direct indication of this in his works, but it is no accident that, in challenging the "theory of the beneficial nature of the struggle for life" on his return from Siberia, he signed himself "*An old transformist*", and it is no accident that he referred to Lamarck then as a brilliant biologist. It is most likely that by the sixties he

was already well acquainted with the biological theory of transformism in the works of certain precursors of Darwin.

We shall conclude our exposition of Chernyshevsky's views in question with a reminder that to his mind organic life in general was merely an extremely complex chemical process. This determines his attitude to vitalism. No special life force exists. The chemical processes which take place in the organism differ only in their complexity from the chemical processes which take place in so-called inorganic nature. "Not so very long ago," remarks Chernyshevsky, "it seemed that the so-called organic substances (for example, acetic acid) existed only in organic bodies. It is now known, however, that under certain circumstances they also arise outside of organic bodies, so that the difference between an organic and an inorganic combination of elements is insignificant. The so-called organic compounds arise and exist in conformity with the same laws, and all equally arise out of inorganic substances. For example, wood differs from an inorganic acid in that this acid is not a complex compound, whereas wood is a combination of numerous complex compounds. It is, as it were, the difference between 2 and 200—a quantitative difference, no more."

Chernyshevsky wrote little about philosophical problems as such although he knew philosophy incomparably better than the vast majority of our leading writers of the late sixties, seventies and eighties, for example, N. K. Mikhailovsky. Philosophy interested him mainly as the theoretical basis of certain practical requirements. This is why even in his article "The Anthropological Principle in Philosophy" he did not lose sight of these requirements, speaking of them time and time again. And this is also why he devotes a great deal of attention in it to those questions of philosophical theory which have a direct bearing on the tasks of practical life. Such, for example, is the question of the philosophical basis of morality, and, above all, of the will.

Chernyshevsky argues that the first result of the entry of the "moral sciences" into the sphere of the exact sciences was the removal of certain old views on human actions. "It is definitely known, for example," he says, "that all the phenomena of the moral world originate from one another and from external circumstances in conformity with the law of causality, and on this basis all assumptions that there can be phenomena that do not arise from preceding phenomena and from external circumstances are regarded as false. Hence, present-day psychology does not accept, for example, the following assumptions: 'in one case a man performs a bad action because he wants to perform a bad action; and in another case he performs a good action because he wants to perform a good action'. It says that the bad action, or the good action, was necessarily prompted by some moral or material fact, or combination of facts, and that the 'wanting' was only the sub-



jective impression which accompanies in our minds the emergence of thoughts or actions from preceding thoughts, actions or external facts." In other words, regarding man as the involuntary product of his environment, Chernyshevsky adopted a most humane attitude even to those unpleasant aspects of human character in which the idealists saw only evil intent deserving of severe punishment. In Chernyshevsky's opinion everything depends on social customs and circumstances, but since social customs are also formed under the influence of circumstances, it is the latter which in the final analysis determine all human actions. "If you blame a person," he wrote, "first try to see whether it is he who is guilty of what you are accusing him of, or the circumstances and customs of society—take a good look, for perhaps what lies here is not his guilt at all, but only his misfortune." The "protectors" chose to regard such statements by Chernyshevsky as a defence of loose morals, but, of course, in so doing they merely demonstrated their lack of understanding of the matter. In fact here too Chernyshevsky was merely expounding and developing the views of his teacher Feuerbach, which had nothing to do with dissoluteness. The latter's aphorisms of the following type are well known: "One thinks differently in a palace than in a hut, the low ceiling of which seems to press down on the brain. We are different people outside from what we are in a room; cramped spaces constrict, wide, open spaces extend the heart and head. Where there is no opportunity to show talent, there is no talent; where there is no scope for activity, there is no striving, at least no real striving, for activity"; or "if you want to improve people, make them happy". But not everyone knows that in the nineteenth century aphorisms and a theory of this kind were merely the repetition and in part the application to changed circumstances of the doctrines of the materialists of the eighteenth century. As early as the forties Marx pointed to the close link between materialist doctrines, on the one hand, and socialist ones, on the other. "If man," he wrote, "is unfree in the materialistic sense, i.e., is free not through the negative power to avoid this or that, but through the positive power to assert his true individuality, crime must not be punished in the individual, but the anti-social sources of crime must be destroyed, and each man must be given social scope for the vital manifestation of his being. If man is shaped by environment, his environment must be made human."<sup>96</sup>

Incidentally, Chernyshevsky's view on human character as the product of circumstance developed under the influence not only of Feuerbach, but also of contemporary West-European socialists, particularly Robert Owen, who, as is known, wrote a whole study on the formation of human character (*A New View of Society or Essays on the Principle of the Formation of the Human Character*) and who in all his practical activity invariably proceeded

from the conviction that people's bad actions are not their fault, but their misfortune.

But if human character is the product of circumstance, it is easy to see how one should answer the question of whether man is good or bad by nature. He is not good or bad in himself, but becomes good or bad depending on the circumstances. Chernyshevsky says: "Therefore, we may think that Ivan is good, while Pyotr is bad; but these opinions apply only to individual men, not to man in general, in the same way as we apply to individual men and not to man in general the conception of the habit of sawing planks, forging iron, etc. Ivan is a carpenter, but we cannot say that man in general is or is not a carpenter. Pyotr can forge iron, but we cannot say that man in general is or is not a blacksmith. The fact that Ivan became a carpenter and Pyotr a blacksmith merely shows that under certain circumstances, which were present in Ivan's life, a man becomes a carpenter; and under other circumstances, which were present in Pyotr's life, a man becomes a blacksmith. In exactly the same way, under certain circumstances a man becomes good, under others, he becomes bad."

From here, of course, it is but a little way to practical conclusions in the direction pointed out by Marx. As an example Chernyshevsky takes the question of how people could become good, so that bad people would become an extreme rarity in the world, and answers it as follows: "Psychology tells us that the most abundant source of the display of bad qualities is inadequacy of means for satisfying requirements; that a man commits a bad action, that is, harms others, almost exclusively when he is obliged to deprive them of something in order not to remain himself without that which he needs." If society were organised in such a way that man's food requirements were properly satisfied, this alone would remove at least nine-tenths of all that is bad in present-day society. We are told that this is impossible because of the imperfection of the technical arts, but even if this argument was valid at one time, with the present state of mechanics and chemistry it has lost all significance: "The land in every country in the temperate zone could provide incomparably more food than is needed for an abundant supply of provisions for populations ten and twenty times larger than the present populations of these countries." Chernyshevsky does not find it possible to analyse why up till now no human society has concerned itself with the proper satisfaction of such an urgent requirement as the requirement for food. But he believes that his remarks are sufficient to explain "the present position of the moral sciences". And they are in fact quite sufficient to give the reader an idea of the point of view of our author.\*

\* Here, as everywhere, Chernyshevsky is completely true to Feuerbach. For readers who are unfamiliar with the works of the German thinker, it will be useful to quote the following passage from a preface written by Feuer-

Written—by virtue of a necessity all too familiar to Russian writers—in Aesopian language, but nevertheless bold and vivid in content, the article “The Anthropological Principle in Philosophy” was bound to produce a very strong impression both on readers who sympathised with Chernyshevsky’s tendency, and, perhaps, an even stronger one on those who opposed him. It is not surprising that it provoked a heated polemic.

### Chapter Three

#### The Polemic with Yurkevich and Others

Of the more or less eminent opponents of Chernyshevsky’s views mention must be made first and foremost of P. Yurkevich, a professor at the Kiev Theological Academy, who attacked him in a long article “From the Science of the Human Spirit” printed in the 4th issue of the *Transactions of the Kiev Theological Academy* for 1860. At the time this article aroused the warm approval of Katkov in the *Russky Vestnik*, and even P. L. Lavrov, who was extremely far from Chernyshevsky’s consistent mode of thought, evidently found Yurkevich’s arguments fairly convincing. Later the philosophical campaign of the esteemed professor of the Theological Academy against Chernyshevsky was extolled by Mr. Volynsky in his above-mentioned work *Russian Critics*. Mr. Volynsky is firmly convinced that Chernyshevsky was totally devastated, as they say, by Yurkevich. And since Mr. Volynsky is the precursor, as it were, of all the philosophical charlatans, now so numerous in our literature, who lead the attack on materialism under the most motley idealist banners—all the Struves, Trubetskoyes, Ivanovs, Lunacharskys, Bazarovs, Yushkeviches, Bermans, Valentinovs, Filosofov, and so on and so forth—we shall examine in considerable detail exactly what seemed so convincing to Mr. Volynsky in the arguments of the Kiev theologian.

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bach to an edition of his works, the first volume of which came out in 1846: “Das Uebel sitzt nicht im Kopf oder Herzen, sondern im Magen der Menschheit.... Ich fühlte es, sagte eine Verbrecherin, wie mir die bösen Gedanken aus dem Magen aufstiegen. Diese Verbrecherin ist das Bild der heutigen menschlichen Gesellschaft. Die einen haben Alles, was nur immer ihr lüsternder Gaumen begehrt, die Andern haben Nichts, selbst nicht das Nothwendige in ihrem Magen. Daher kommen alle Uebel und Leiden, selbst die Kopf- und Herzenskrankheiten der Menschheit” (Vorwort, XV, ed. 1846). [“Evil has its seat not in the head or heart, but in the stomach of mankind.... I felt the evil thoughts coming out of my stomach, said a woman criminal. This criminal is the symbol of modern human society. Some have everything that their greedy palate craves, others have nothing, not even the necessities in their stomach. Hence all the evil and suffering, even the head and heart diseases of mankind.”]

*Firstly*, Mr. Volynsky is very pleased with Yurkevich's idea that there is a whole chasm between the facts of internal and external experience and that any attempt to judge one subject from the viewpoint of another should be expelled from science. Chernyshevsky overlooked this and therefore committed a whole series of errors. According to him, philosophy sees in the human organism that which the natural sciences see in it. In this connection Yurkevich asked what was then the need for philosophy "which sees yet again that which other sciences have seen before it"? For his part Mr. Volynsky adds with a most complacent air: "Such is the first error of the author of 'The Anthropological Principle' according to the clear and simple explanation of Yurkevich."\*

That Yurkevich's explanation was simple is true. But today it could seem clear only to someone who was quite unfamiliar with the question.

Chernyshevsky adopted the viewpoint of Feuerbach. And the question of the relation of philosophy to the natural sciences was regarded by Feuerbach as follows. He considered that philosophy should give way to natural science: "My philosophy," he said, "is that we need no philosophy." But in order that philosophy might usefully give way to the natural sciences, it was essential that the naturalists themselves should master those deductions of philosophy which led it to its own negation. In other words, it was essential that natural scientists ceased to be narrow specialists. But there was still a long way to go to this. The overwhelming majority of natural scientists did not go further in their thinking than the confines of their special science and continued to hold obsolete philosophical and social ideas. Until this shortcoming was remedied, philosophy could not merge with natural science. It was in this sense that Feuerbach said he went along with the naturalists to a certain point only. He would have expressed his view more accurately had he said that the natural scientists of his day were not capable of going along with him beyond a certain point. But be that as it may, he held this view and it contained the reply to Yurkevich's question. Chernyshevsky was, of course, quite familiar with this view. In evidence I shall quote the following passage by him: "Those naturalists who imagine that they are builders of all-embracing theories have actually remained pupils, and usually dull pupils, of the ancient thinkers who created the metaphysical systems, and usually of thinkers whose systems had already been shattered, partly by Schelling and utterly by Hegel.... When the naturalists stop talking such and similar metaphysical nonsense they will become capable of working out, and probably will work out, on the basis of natural science, a system of conceptions that will be more exact and fuller than those

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\* *Russian Critics*, St. Petersburg, 1896, p. 282.

expounded by Feuerbach. Meanwhile, the exposition of the scientific conceptions of the so-called fundamental problems of human enquiry made by Feuerbach remains the best." This passage was taken by us from the above-mentioned preface to the third edition of "The Aesthetic Relation of Art to Reality" which was planned but not published. The preface was written in 1888. But the passage quoted by us relates to a view which was expressed by Feuerbach in 1845 and which was, of course, well known to Chernyshevsky when he wrote the article "The Anthropological Principle in Philosophy". We repeat, this view contains the reply to the question as to the need for philosophy which sees yet again that which the natural sciences have seen. This reply may have been unknown to Yurkevich, who was a backward person *ex professo*, so to say. But how could it have been unknown to Mr. Volynsky who aspired to the role of a thinker of the very latest model? The trouble is that our thinkers of the very latest model have no knowledge at all of the truly advanced authors whom they "criticise". They beckon the reader on, but themselves lag behind, warming up old philosophical dishes. There were many such people in Germany too in Feuerbach's day. Feuerbach called them *Wiederkäuer* (ruminants). Unfortunately, we have incomparably more "ruminants" today; our literature is literally teeming with them. This is probably very pleasant for their precursor—Mr. Volynsky; but it is bound to nauseate those who do not engage in chewing the philosophical cud.

*Secondly*, Mr. Volynsky follows Yurkevich in finding that "Chernyshevsky outlined the question of the unity of human nature badly". The point here is as follows. Yurkevich ascribes to Chernyshevsky the idea that there is *no difference at all* between material and psychical phenomena, and inquires triumphantly how it is that sensations arise from the movement of a nerve. This is the old nonsense that has long been flung at materialists and from which it merely follows that the people who want to "criticise" materialism do not even know the ABC of materialism. Nowhere in his article does Chernyshevsky say that there is no difference at all between so-called physical phenomena, on the one hand, and psychical phenomena, on the other. On the contrary, he categorically admits the existence of this difference; but he believes that it in no way justifies attributing psychical phenomena to a particular non-material factor. We are already familiar with his remark to the effect that there are very many different qualities in every object. We now shall discuss it in more detail. "For example," Chernyshevsky says, "a tree grows and burns; we say it has two qualities: the power of growth and combustibility. What similarity is there between these two qualities? They are totally different; there is no concept under which one could put both these qualities, except the general conception—quality; there is no con-

cept under which we could put both series of phenomena corresponding to these qualities, except the concept—phenomenon. Or, for example, ice is hard and sparkles; what is there common to hardness and sparkle? The logical distance from one of these qualities to the other is immeasurably great or, it would be better to say, there is no logical distance between them, whether short or long, because there is no logical relation between them. From this we see that the combination of quite heterogeneous qualities in one object is the general law of things." The same also with the quality we call the capacity for sensation and thought. Its distance from the so-called physical qualities of the living organism is immeasurably great. But this does not prevent it being a quality of the same organism which, at the same time, possesses extension and capacity for movement. Those who believe that since sensation and thought are quite unlike movement and extension they should be attributed to another substance (spirit) quite different from that (matter) to which extension and movement are attributed, are guilty of a grave sin against logic. Such is Chernyshevsky's idea, and if Mr. Volynsky had the "quality" essential for understanding it, he would have seen at once how invalid, and what is more, how pathetic was Yurkevich's argument, the whole alleged force of which lay in its intentional or unintentional distortion of the views of the Russian adherent of the anthropological principle. But the fact of the matter is that Mr. Volynsky did not possess the "qualities" essential for understanding Chernyshevsky, just as our present-day "ruminant" wisdom-lovers, who are naively but firmly convinced that the philosophical views of Chernyshevsky have long since become "*antiquated*", did not and still do not possess them.

Even J. Priestley remarked in his *Disquisitions* that the idea that brain vibrations are identical with perception would be a very great abuse of materialist doctrine. "It is easy to form an idea of there being vibrations without any perceptions accompanying them. But it is supposed that the brain, besides its *vibrating power*, has superadded to it a *percipient or sentient power*, likewise; there being no reason that we know why this power may not be imparted to it."\* This is precisely the point of view held by all the prominent materialists of modern times, including, of course, Feuerbach and Chernyshevsky. The opponents of materialism—the consistent or inconsistent, conscious or unconscious idealists—ought, in their criticism of this doctrine, to convince us above all that they know more about it than Priestley does, and show us what grounds specifically prevent them from recognising, together with Priestley, that the brain, besides having the ability to vibrate, may also

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\* *Disquisitions Relating to Matter and Spirit*. By Joseph Priestley, Vol. I. The second edition, Birmingham, MDCCLXXXII, p. 121.

be capable of perceiving. They undoubtedly have such grounds. But these amount to the spiritualistic prejudice that by itself, i.e., unless animated by spirit, matter is dead and incapable not only of perception, but even of motion. To refer, in arguing with the materialists, to such grounds means to commit an obvious *petitio principii*,\* i.e., to argue from the very same proposition which has to be proved. The opponents of materialism themselves more or less vaguely sense this. Therefore, they are usually very careful not to show the grounds which hinder them from recognising the capacity for perceiving as one of the properties of matter, and prefer to refute what no single prominent materialist has ever stated, at least in modern times, i.e., that perception is the same as motion.\*\* We leave it to the reader to judge of this sort of criticism, a criticism which is more widespread in our country than anywhere else, and is more so now than ever before.

So, once again—Chernyshevsky does not identify perception and motion, but he regards the ability to perceive as the same quality of matter as its capacity for motion. The question now arises as to what is the nature of the conditions under which matter which possesses the *ability* to perceive becomes *perceiving in fact*. Chernyshevsky replies that these conditions have been little studied as yet, but that we can now attribute a material nature to them with complete certainty. The ability to perceive reveals itself in organisms only, and we already know that, in Chernyshevsky's opinion, the life of the organism is primarily a certain chemical process. This, in his opinion, explains the fact that the organism displays this ability which we do not find in unorganised matter.

This is a most important question, and we invite the reader to give it his full attention. Chernyshevsky writes: "...during a chemical process bodies reveal qualities that are totally unobserved when they are in the state of an immobile compound. For example, wood by itself does not burn; tinder and flint also do not burn of themselves. If, however, a particle of steel made red-hot by friction (a blow) with flint falls on the tinder and greatly raises the temperature of some part of this tinder, it creates the conditions necessary for the beginning of the process that is called combustion in this particle of tinder. The latter, drawn into this chemical process, will begin to burn, which it did not do when it was not going through this chemical process. If brought in contact with wood while undergoing this process, it will draw the latter into its process of combustion, and during this process the wood will

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\* [taking a principle for granted]

\*\* We allow that among the *ancient* materialists—Democritus and Epicurus, for example—there may have been a certain lack of clarity on this point, although this is far from having been proved: it must be remembered that the views of these thinkers have not survived in their entirety.

also burn, radiate light and reveal other qualities that it did not display before the process began. Take, for example, the process of fermentation. The brew in the vat is still; the yeast in the cup is also still. Put the yeast into the vat; a chemical process called fermentation will commence; the brew bubbles, froths, and seethes in the vat."

These arguments of Chernyshevsky's are reminiscent of the view of those French and English materialists of the eighteenth century who assumed that the capacity for perception and thought was the result of a certain state of an organised body.\* But in Chernyshevsky this opinion contains nothing at all exceptional. Chernyshevsky understands perfectly that there is no great difference between a "chemical process", on the one hand, and the "state of an immobile compound", on the other. In view of the extreme importance of this subject we find ourselves again obliged to quote a long extract from the article "The Anthropological Principle in Philosophy".

"It stands to reason," Chernyshevsky admits, "that when we speak of the difference in the state of a body during a chemical process and at a time when it is not in that process, we mean only the quantitative distinction between a vigorous, rapid course of that process and a very feeble, slow course of it. Properly speaking, every body is constantly undergoing a chemical process. For example, a log, even if it is not set on fire or burnt in a stove but lies quietly, seemingly undergoing no changes, in the wall of a house, will nevertheless come in time to the same end to which burning brings it: it will gradually decay, and nothing will be left of it, too, but ashes (the dust of decayed wood, of which in the end nothing remains but the mineral particles of ash). But if this process—e.g., in the case of a log decaying in a house wall—takes place very slowly and feebly, then qualities inherent in a body undergoing the process manifest themselves with a microscopic feebleness that is completely imperceptible under ordinary conditions. For example, the slow decay of a piece of wood in a house wall also generates heat; but that quantity of it which in burning would have been concentrated into a few hours, in this case becomes diluted, so to speak, into several decades, so that it does not achieve any result that is easily perceptible in practice; the existence of this heat is negligible for practical purposes. It is the same as the taste of wine in a whole pond of water into which

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\* For example, Holbach tended towards this idea, and it was expressed categorically by J. Priestley. The latter says: "my idea now is that sensation and thought do necessarily result from the organisation of the brain, when the powers of mere life are given to the system." *Loc. cit.*, p. 150. Cf. in general the whole of Section 13 of the *Disquisitions*: "of the Connection between Sensation and Organisation."



one drop of wine has been cast: from the scientific point of view, the pond contains a mixture of water and wine, but to all practical purposes it can be assumed that there is no wine at all in it."

This brilliant passage allows one to surmise that for Chernyshevsky in this respect too there was no cleavage between organised matter on the one hand and unorganised matter, on the other. To be sure, the organism of the animal (and particularly of the animal at the top of the zoological tree, that is, man) displays in the respect that is of interest to us such properties as are altogether alien to unorganised matter. But, after all, the burning of a piece of wood, too, is accompanied by a number of phenomena that are not to be observed during the process of its slow decay. However, there is no essential difference between these two processes. On the contrary, this is one and the same process, with this difference only that in the one case it is very rapid and in the other, extremely slow. Therefore, in the one case the properties which belong to a body undergoing this process manifest themselves with great force, while in the other case they do so "with a microscopic feebleness that is completely imperceptible under ordinary conditions". In regard to the question of psychical phenomena this means that in an unorganised form, also, matter is not devoid of the basic capacity for "sensation", which provides such rich "spiritual" fruits among the higher animals. But in unorganised matter this capacity exists to an extremely small extent. Therefore it is totally imperceptible to the investigator and, without risk of committing any appreciable error, we can equate it to nil. Nevertheless, it must not be forgotten that this capacity in general is inherent in matter and that in consequence there are no grounds for regarding it as something miraculous where it manifests itself particularly strongly, as can be seen, for example, among the higher animals in general, and pre-eminently in man. In expressing this idea—with the caution necessary under the conditions of our press at that time—Chernyshevsky came close to such materialists as La Mettrie and Diderot, who, in turn, adopted the view of Spinozism, freed of the unnecessary theological appendages.

Mr. Volynsky believes that Yurkevich expressed an extraordinarily clever idea in saying that the changing of the motion of the air into sound and the vibration of the ether into light must presuppose a percipient being capable of turning quantitative motions into the qualities of sound and light. But Chernyshevsky himself also knew this very well; only he assumed that this percipient being was matter organised in a certain way, and neither Mr. Volynsky nor Yurkevich whom he extols advanced a single sensible argument against this assumption.

Yurkevich also asserted that quantitative differences are trans-

formed into qualitative differences not in the object itself but in its relation to the sentient subject. This is a very gross logical error. In order to become changed in its relation to the sentient subject, the object must undergo a preliminary change in itself. If for us ice does not have the same properties as steam, it is because the mutual relations of the water particles in the former case are entirely different from those in the latter. But enough of this.

*Thirdly*, Mr. Volynsky believes that Yurkevich was right in reproaching Chernyshevsky for having forgotten the main feature by which man is distinguished from other animals, namely, that man manifests himself "as a *personal* spirit". On this we find it quite unnecessary to argue with Mr. Volynsky and we refer the reader to such works as Darwin's *The Descent of Man* or Romanes' book devoted to a study of the mental development in man and the animals. One need only compare the conclusions of Darwin and Romanes with those of Chernyshevsky to see how firmly our defender of "The Anthropological Principle in Philosophy" adhered to the viewpoint of natural science.

We know how contemptuous Chernyshevsky was of Yurkevich's arguments. He did not analyse these arguments—nor had he any possibility of doing so under the conditions of the censorship—but simply declared them to be obsolete and not in the least convincing.

"I am a seminarian myself," he wrote in his "Polemical Gems". "I know from my own experience the position of people who get their education as Yurkevich did. I have seen people in the same position as he is. I therefore find it hard to laugh at him; it would mean laughing at the impossibility of having decent books available, laughing at a person's complete lack of power to develop himself, at a situation that is unimaginably restricted in all possible respects.

"I do not know Mr. Yurkevich's age; if he is no longer a young man, it is too late to worry about him. But if he is still young, I gladly offer him the small collection of books in my possession."

Mr. Volynsky still finds this reply highly unsatisfactory. He thinks that Chernyshevsky replied in this way solely because of his inability to refute Yurkevich. Evidently some journalists at the beginning of the sixties also reasoned in this manner. For example, Dudyshkin, enumerating Yurkevich's allegedly irrefutable arguments point by point, wrote the following in *Otechestvenniye Zapiski*, addressing himself to Chernyshevsky.

"The matter would appear to be clear; it now concerns not someone else, but you; not philosophy or physiology in general, but your ignorance of these sciences. Why drag in the red herring of seminary philosophy? Why confuse totally different things and

say that you knew all that when you were at the seminary and even now remember it all by heart?"

To this Chernyshevsky replied that Dudyshkin's lack of acquaintance with seminary notebooks prevented him from understanding what was at issue. "If you took the trouble to look through these notebooks," he continues, "you would see that all the shortcomings which Mr. Yurkevich discovers in me, these notebooks discover in Aristotle, Bacon, Gassendi, Locke, etc., etc., in all the philosophers who were not idealists. Consequently, these reproaches by no means apply to me as an individual writer; they apply rather to the theory which I consider it useful to popularise. If you are incredulous, take a look at the *Philosophical Dictionary*, published by Mr. S.G., which takes the same line as Mr. Yurkevich, and you will see that the same thing is said there of every non-idealist: he does not know psychology, he is not acquainted with the natural sciences, he rejects inner experience, he is overwhelmed by facts, he confuses metaphysics with the natural sciences, he degrades man, etc., etc. Tell me, then, why should I regard seriously the author of the famous article and the people who praise him, when I can see that they are repeating against me personally things that have been repeated from time immemorial about every thinker of the school to which I adhere? I should reason thus: either they do not know, or they are pretending not to know that these reproaches are not against me, but against a whole school; consequently, they are either people with a poor knowledge of the history of philosophy, or merely acting in accordance with tactics, the hypocritical nature of which is known to them. In either case such opponents are not worthy of serious dispute." This was quite right.

Chernyshevsky was equally right when he wrote in the same article that the theory which he considered correct was the last link in a series of philosophical systems and that it proceeded from Hegelian theory, just as Hegel's had proceeded from Schelling's. He said proudly that he regarded his philosophical theory not only as the newest, but also as the most complete and most correct.

One would have to be Mr. Volynsky or one of his present-day numerous "ruminant" followers to consider Yurkevich's arguments irrefutable. In fact these arguments did not even shake—to say nothing of refuting—any of Chernyshevsky-F Feuerbach's basic propositions. But it must be acknowledged that certain deductions drawn by Chernyshevsky from the main propositions of his materialist philosophy were insufficiently elaborated, and therefore one-sided and—by virtue of their one-sidedness—not entirely correct. Such were his deductions relating to the doctrine of morality.

*Chapter Four***The Doctrine of Morality**

"A careful examination of the motives that prompt people's actions shows that all deeds, good and bad, noble and base, heroic and craven, are prompted by one cause: a man acts in the way that gives him most pleasure. He is guided by self-interest, which causes him to abstain from a smaller gain, or a lesser pleasure, in order to obtain a larger gain or a larger pleasure." In support of this idea, Chernyshevsky quotes several examples. When a wife laments the death of her beloved husband, the thought of herself forms the basis of her grief: "What shall I do without you? Life will be impossible for me without you", etc. The same is seen also in the grief of a mother who has lost her child: "I have been robbed of all my hopes in you, I have been robbed of all my joy!", etc. Here, according to Chernyshevsky, the egoistic basis of the feeling is very clear. Cases of so-called self-sacrifice are a little more difficult. The inhabitants of Saguntum committed suicide to avoid surrendering to Hannibal.<sup>97</sup> This was an heroic act; but this heroic act does not contradict egoistic self-interest: "Had they not exterminated themselves, the Carthaginians would have exterminated them, but the latter would have first subjected them to barbarous torture, and common sense prompted them to prefer a quick death to a slow and painful one." Or take Lucretia who stabbed herself after Tarquinius Sextus had raped her. Chernyshevsky believes that she, too, was guided by self-interest. "Her husband might have spoken words of consolation and endearment to her, but such words would have been sheer nonsense, testifying to the nobility of the one who uttered them, but by no means averting the inevitable consequences of the incident. Collatinus might have said to his wife: 'I regard you as pure and love you as before.' With the conceptions prevailing at that time, however, and prevailing with but little alteration today, he could not have proved his words by deeds; willy-nilly, he had already lost considerable respect and love for his wife. He might have attempted to conceal this loss by deliberately exaggerated tenderness towards her, but such tenderness is more offensive than coldness, more bitter than beating and abuse. Lucretia was right in thinking that suicide was preferable to living in a state that was degrading compared to the life to which she had been accustomed. A fastidious man would prefer to go hungry rather than touch food that had been in any way polluted. A self-respecting person would prefer death to degradation."\*

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\* *Works*, VI, pp. 230-31.

In advancing these arguments Chernyshevsky makes a reservation. He does not attempt in the slightest to belittle the great praise which the inhabitants of Saguntum and Lucretia deserve. He merely argues that their heroic acts were also wise ones. And to argue this is not, in his opinion, to belittle heroism and nobility. This is quite true, and when people like Yurkevich reproached him for not being able to appreciate these feelings, they were merely displaying their own inability to understand our author's views. Chernyshevsky's doctrine of morality did not belittle heroism and nobility in any way; on the contrary, it sought to enhance them by pointing out that the path chosen by the hero is the path which is prescribed by proper self-interest. But this does not remove the logical error inherent in Chernyshevsky's views. In fact, by the examples of the inhabitants of Saguntum and Lucretia Chernyshevsky wished to convince us that noble actions are not reckless ones. We do not doubt this in the slightest. But we maintain that an action based on self-interest is one thing and an action the consequences of which are just as favourable for the person who commits it as the consequences of the action that was based solely on self-interest is quite another. We grant that it was in fact more advantageous for Lucretia to take her life, but we doubt very much that she could have indulged in any hard-headed calculations of advantage just before her suicide. Such calculations require composure, and Lucretia could not have been composed. Would it not be more correct to assume that in her action self-interest, i.e., *reason*, played a far smaller part than feeling which had developed under the influence of the relations, customs and views of that time? Human feelings and customs usually adapt themselves to the existing social—and also family, of course—relations in such a way that actions committed under their influence may sometimes appear as the fruit of the most hard-headed calculations, whereas in fact they were not the result of calculation at all. This is true to such an extent that Chernyshevsky himself confirms it by his own reflections: he says, as we have seen, that a self-respecting person would prefer death to degradation. And this again is true. But one must not equate custom with self-interest, and one must not say that a person who acts on the strength of a certain praiseworthy custom "is guided by self-interest, which causes him to abstain from a smaller gain, or a lesser pleasure, in order to obtain a larger gain or a larger pleasure". In general, very noticeable in Chernyshevsky's view of rational egoism is the endeavour, characteristic of all "periods of enlightenment" (*Aufklärungsperioden*), to seek support for morality in reason and an explanation of the individual's character and behaviour in his more or less hard-headed calculation. Sometimes Chernyshevsky's arguments in this connection are as similar as two

peas in a pod to the arguments of Helvétius and those who shared his ideas. They recall almost as strongly the arguments of Socrates, the typical representative of the epoch of enlightenment in Ancient Greece, who, in coming forward as a champion of friendship, showed that it is *advantageous* to have friends because they may be of some use in times of misfortune. The explanation for such extremes of rationality is that the enlighteners were usually incapable of adopting the *viewpoint of development*.\*

We know that, according to Chernyshevsky's theory, man is by nature neither good nor bad but becomes good or bad depending on circumstances.\*\* Were we to recognise that man is always prompted by calculation in his behaviour, then we should have to formulate Chernyshevsky's view of human nature differently; we should have to say that man is by nature neither good nor bad, but only calculating, this property of his becoming more or less pronounced depending on circumstances. But such a formulation would hardly be to our author's liking.

What is good and what is bad, according to his theory? This question is answered by the same article, "The Anthropological Principle in Philosophy"—a very informative one, as the reader can see. "Individuals regard as good the actions of other people that are beneficial for them; society holds as good what is good for the whole of society, or for the majority of its members. Lastly, people in general, irrespective of nation or estate, describe as good that which is beneficial for mankind in general." It often happens that the interests of different nations or estates run counter to one another or to human interests generally; it is also a frequent occurrence that the interests of one estate are opposed to those of the whole nation. How is one to decide in this case what is good and what is bad? It is very easy to decide this question in theory: "The interests of mankind as a whole stand higher than the interests of an individual nation; the common interests of a whole nation are higher than the interests of an individual estate; the interests of a large estate are higher than the interests of a small one." But what happens in practice? In practice people describe an action that is beneficial to them as good, and one

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\* For more about this see our book *Beiträge zur Geschichte des Materialismus—Holbach, Helvétius und Karl Marx*, Stuttgart, 1896.<sup>98</sup>

\*\* It is worth noting, however, that previously our author expressed a different view of human nature. According to that view, man is "a being which by nature is inclined to respect and love truth and goodness, and to abhor all that is bad, a being capable of violating the laws of goodness and truth only through ignorance, error or under the influence of circumstances stronger than his character and reason, but a being never capable of preferring evil to good of his own free will". (See the article on Shchedrin's *Provincial Sketches* in the *Sovremennik*, 1857, No. 6, reprinted in *Collected Works*, Vol. III. The lines quoted are on pp. 221-22 of the volume.) This is closer to Socrates than to the present-day doctrine of development.

that is detrimental to them as bad, rarely asking what relation it bears to the broader interests of the whole. But Chernyshevsky is convinced that people, estates or nations, that prefer their own interests to the general interests, suffer from this "theoretical fallacy" themselves in the final analysis. He says: "In those cases when, for its own advantage, an individual nation tramples upon the interests of mankind, or when an individual estate tramples upon the interests of the nation, the result is always detrimental not only to the side whose interest has been encroached upon, but also to the side that had hoped to gain by this. It always turns out that a nation which enslaves mankind ruins itself; an individual estate that sacrifices the whole nation to its own interest comes to a bad end itself." We do not propose to analyse here the historical and economic examples with the help of which he seeks to support his thesis: we shall touch upon this subject below, when we discuss Chernyshevsky's historical views. For the moment, however, we shall confine ourselves to the remark that no matter how true or false his proposition, what he says about the relation of the interests of the part to the interests of the whole undoubtedly enables us to formulate the question of egoism more correctly than it has been done in his article. Let us, in fact, assume that we are dealing with a society which is not divided into estates or classes. In such a society the actions of individuals that coincide with the interests of the whole will be considered good, and those that are opposed to these interests will be considered bad. Thus, at the basis of judgments on good and evil there will lie what might be called the egoism of the whole, *public egoism*. But the egoism of the whole by no means excludes the altruism of individuals, *individual altruism*. On the contrary, it is its source: society strives to educate its individual members in such a way that they put public interests before their private interest; the more the actions of a given individual *satisfy* this requirement of society, the more self-sacrificing, moral and altruistic the individual will be. And the more his actions *go against* this requirement, the more self-seeking, immoral and egoistic he will be. This is the criterion which has always—more or less consciously—been applied by people in their judgment of whether a given action by a given person is altruistic or egoistic. The only possible difference here amounts to what exactly is the whole, the interests of which are put before the interests of individuals in the given case.

But when society applies its criterion based on the interests of the whole to the judgment of actions by individuals, it wants an action that is beneficial to it to be dictated by the inner urge of the individual who committed it, and not by the individual's thoughts of his own gain. As long as an individual who is serving the interests of the whole is guided by his personal gain, he dis-

plays more or less acumen, more or less foresight, but not more or less altruism. Educating a person to be moral means that actions which are beneficial to society become an instinctive requirement (Kant's "categorical imperative") for him. And the stronger this requirement, the more moral the individual. Heroes are people who cannot help obeying this requirement even when the satisfaction of it runs counter to their most essential interests, threatening them, for example, with death. This was usually overlooked by the "enlighteners", Chernyshevsky included. It may, incidentally, be added that Kant, who maintained that moral promptings bore no relation to advantage, was just as mistaken as the "enlighteners". He also in this case failed to adopt the viewpoint of development and to deduce *individual altruism* from *public egoism*.

It is interesting that Chernyshevsky, who maintained that man is always guided by considerations of gain, in the final analysis thought exactly what we are saying, but formulated his idea badly as a result of the afore-mentioned incorrectness of his logical premises. Take a look at how Lopukhov and Kirsanov describe themselves in the novel *What Is To Be Done?* Vera Pavlovna, who has made the acquaintance of Kirsanov, asks him whether he loves Lopukhov very much. In this connection the following conversation takes place between them:

"I? I do not love anyone but myself, Vera Pavlovna.

"So you do not love him?

"We lived together without quarreling, that's enough.

"And he did not love you?

"I did not notice anything. But let us ask him: Did you love me, Dmitri?

"I never felt any particular hatred for you."\*

Kirsanov does not love "anyone but himself", and Lopukhov confines himself to the fact that he does not feel "any particular hatred" for his best friend. As you can see, they are egoists to the very core. And they remain such "egoists"... in all their conversations and statements. Lopukhov, having decided to renounce the academic career which awaits him, in order to marry Vera Pavlovna and save her from her parents' authority, convinces himself that he is not making a sacrifice: "And I had no intention of sacrificing anything. Up to now I have never been so stupid as to make sacrifices—and I hope I never will be. I did what was best for me. I'm not the sort of person to make sacrifices. There aren't such people anyway, nobody makes sacrifices; it is a false concept; a sacrifice is stuff and nonsense. You do what you like best. But just try to explain it. It's understandable in theory; but when he is faced with the fact, a person is moved and says: you are my benefactor."\*\*

\* Works, Vol. IX, Section 2, p. 92.

\*\* Ibid., p. 85.



You do what you like best. Who follows this rule? Everybody. But each person is "self", and for each person each idea of this or that action by him is inseparable from his awareness of his "self". This indisputable fact is interpreted by Chernyshevsky—as it has always been interpreted by the "enlighteners" of all countries—in favour of his theory of rational egoism. Having convinced himself that it would even be beneficial for him to renounce an academic career and marry Vera Pavlovna, Lopukhov concludes his reflection on this point with the following solemn statement: "How true it is that the 'self' is always in the foreground—I began with myself and I have ended with myself. What did I begin with: 'sacrifice'—what trickery! As if I were renouncing academic fame and a professorial chair—what nonsense! It makes no difference, I will work just the same, and get a chair just the same, and serve medicine just the same. It is nice for a person who is a theoretician to see how egoism plays with his thoughts in practice."\*

Here Chernyshevsky's logical error is displayed most prominently. From the fact that the awareness of his "self" never leaves a person in his thoughts about his actions, it by no means follows that all his actions are egoistic. If the "self" in question sees its happiness in the happiness of others; if it has a "passion" for this happiness, such a "self" is called altruistic, not egoistic. And to seek to obscure the profound difference between egoism and altruism merely on the basis that altruistic actions are also accompanied in people by an awareness of their "self" is to wish to introduce logical confusion where complete clarity is quite essential. The extent to which it is essential is shown by Chernyshevsky's own example. Having equated altruism with egoism, he finds himself compelled to seek another criterion to distinguish those actions which are usually called *egoistic* from those which are given the name of *altruistic*. And what does he find?

In his *Notes on Journals* (January 1857) he says, defining the difference between Pechorin and Rudin: "One is an egoist who thinks of nothing but his own personal pleasure; the other is an enthusiast who forgets about himself completely and is totally absorbed in general interests; one lives for his passions, the other for his ideas. They are people ... who stand in complete contrast

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\* Ibid., p. 86. In a similar way Vera Pavlovna, explaining to the seamstresses her intention of setting up a cooperative workshop, says: "This is because I have no great passion for money; you know that different people have different passions, not everyone has them just for money: some have a passion for balls, others for clothes or cards, and all people like that are even prepared to face ruin for their passion, many of them do ruin themselves, and no one is surprised that their passion is dearer to them than money. But my passion is for what I am going to try to undertake with you" (ibid., p. 117). In her case too the matter is depicted in such a way as to suggest that she is always putting her "self" in the foreground.

to each other.”\* Quite right! But precisely because such contrasts are possible it is wrong to say that all people are egoists and that they differ from one another only in the greater or lesser extent of their desire for gain. It was not for gain that Rudin lived for his ideas, and in exactly the same way it was not for gain that Pechorin lived for his passions.

Another example. After marrying Lopukhov, Vera Pavlovna did not see her parents for six whole months; then she visited them, and this is how our author describes the impression which she carried away of that visit: “For six months Vera Pavlovna had breathed clear air, she had already grown quite unaccustomed to the stifling atmosphere of cunning words, each of which was uttered out of calculating self-interest, to hearing wicked thoughts, base plans, and the cellar made a terrible impression on her. Filth, vulgarity, cynicism of all kind—all this struck her now with the force of something new.

“How did I have the strength to live in such vile conditions? How could I breathe in that cellar? And I not only lived there, I even stayed healthy. It’s amazing, beyond comprehension. *How did I manage to grow up there with a love of goodness? It’s incredible, past understanding*, thought Vera Pavlovna as she returned home, and felt as if she were resting after almost choking.”\*\*

Formerly Vera Pavlovna had lived in an “atmosphere of cunning words, each of which was uttered out of calculating self-interest”. Now she finds it difficult to breathe in this atmosphere. Why should it be difficult if people in general are guided by nothing but self-interest? She finds it difficult because the self-interest by which people such as her parents are guided is bad, “calculating” self-interest, totally alien to a “love of goodness”. So we see that after having reduced everything to self-interest Chernyshevsky was obliged to distinguish between calculating self-interest, “alien to a love of goodness” and uncalculating self-interest which is full of this love.\*\*\* In other words, he returns to the old distinction between egoism and altruism. The same thing happened to him as happened much earlier to Holbach and the other eighteenth-century Enlighteners who also reduced everything to self-interest and also found themselves compelled by logic to distinguish between calculating and uncalculating self-interest.

\* *Works*, Vol. III, p. 66.

\*\* *Ibid.*, p. 108.

\*\*\* In another passage of the same novel he displays great displeasure with people “who are accustomed to interpret the word ‘interest’ in the too narrow sense of common self-interest” (*Works*, Vol. IX, p. 169). So now it emerges that in addition to common self-interest there is a kind that is uncommon. How does it differ from the common kind? In that people who are guided by it take the interests of their “conscience” into consideration (*ibidem*).

In the above-mentioned article by Chernyshevsky on *Provincial Sketches* we find the following most correct idea: "the customs and rules which govern society arise and continue in consequence of facts which are independent of the will of the person who follows them: they must necessarily be regarded from the historical viewpoint."\* But if the customs and rules which govern *society* arise independently of the will of its members and if they must necessarily be regarded from the historical, and not the rationalistic viewpoint, the customs and rules which determine the actions of individuals must also be regarded in the same way; they in their turn also arise independently of the will, and consequently, also of the *self-interest* of the individual and the individual frequently obeys them in spite of the fact that this goes against his personal interests.

In fact this is precisely what Chernyshevsky means to say, when he makes his heroes assure us that they have never loved anyone but themselves. This assurance of his heroes would appear to be contradicted by Lopukhov's imaginary fiancée—about whom he speaks to Vera Pavlovna when he is dancing with her on her birthday—calling herself "love of people".\*\* But actually there is no contradiction here: Chernyshevsky simply means that the whole moral being of his heroes is imbued with a love of people, as a result of which the actions dictated by this love are an urgent requirement of their "self". The desire for unselfish action is so characteristic of Lopukhov and Kirsanov that, in giving way to it, they experience no inner struggle, but simply follow their own good instinct, as a result of which they imagine themselves to be people who think only of themselves.\*\*\*

Their logical mistake is caused by the fact that in their actions they are governed by feeling, not logic. And *in their case* such a mistake might be said to be inevitable. But in assessing their characters we are by no means obliged to repeat their logical error. We should understand that in fact these people are not egoists at all and that those who believe them and think them egoists are confusing concepts without the differentiation of which there can be no proper doctrine of morality.

The process due to which individual altruism grows on the basis of public egoism is a *dialectical process*, which usually es-

\* *Works*, Vol. III, p. 214.

\*\* [*Works*, Vol. IX, Section 2], p. 70. ("Vera's first dream.")

\*\*\* Reflecting on his relationship with Vera Pavlovna, Kirsanov reasons thus with himself: "If I once act against the whole of my human nature, I will lose the possibility to be at peace, the possibility to be content with myself forever, I will poison the whole of my life" (*ibid.*, p. 151). Kirsanov merely forgets to add that, in possessing such a "nature", he has no need to resort to the calculation of gain; such a "nature" does not need calculation in order to decide upon a good action.

capable of the notice of the "enlighteners". As people pursuing primarily practical aims, the "enlighteners" show little interest in the dialectics of phenomena and concepts in general. We shall see this presently on the example of our author. For the time being, however, in parting with his doctrine of morality, we would say that, whatever the logical error inherent in this doctrine, it is worlds apart from the propagation of practical egoism. This was not understood by people like Yurkevich at the time when the article "The Anthropological Principle in Philosophy" appeared. And it is not understood now by people like Mr. Volynsky, the precursor of our "ruminant" wisdom-lovers. By displaying their misunderstanding of it, such people testify to their own intellectual poverty. Chernyshevsky had every right to despise them. And he made extensive use of this right. Whole pages in his novel *What Is To Be Done?* are taken up with the ridicule of these people, and these pages may be called brilliant without the slightest exaggeration. We should like to reproduce one of them in part.

Describing Lopukhov's relationship with Vera Pavlovna in the period preceding his marriage to her, Chernyshevsky pretends to be indignant at his callousness and says that not only is it impossible to justify him, but it is wrong to even try to do so. Some might say in his defence that he was a medical man and engaged in the natural sciences which, as is known, incline one towards materialism. To this Chernyshevsky ironically objects that all the sciences lead to materialism, but that fortunately not all scientists are materialists. "Therefore," he concludes, "Lopukhov remains guilty. Compassionate people, who do not try to justify him, could also say in his excuse that he is not entirely without certain praiseworthy features: he has deliberately and firmly resolved to renounce all worldly gain and honour in order to work for the benefit of others, finding that the pleasure from such work is the finest gain for him; he looked upon the girl, who was so beautiful that he fell in love with her, with a gaze purer than that with which some brothers regard their sisters; but against this excuse of his materialism it must be said that in general there is not a single person without some good features, and that materialists, whatever they may be, are nevertheless materialists, and this in itself is conclusive proof that they are base, immoral people who must not be excused, because excusing them would be pandering to materialism. So one cannot excuse Lopukhov without justifying him. And he must not be justified either, because the lovers of fine thoughts and champions of noble aspirations, who accuse materialists of being base, immoral people, have of late so recommended themselves in respect of intellect, and character too, in the eyes of all respectable people, materialists and non-materialists alike,

that to defend anyone against their reprimands has become quite superfluous, and to pay attention to their words has become quite improper.”\*

### Chapter Five

#### Chernyshevsky and Dialectics

In his work on Lessing Chernyshevsky says:

“If anyone was ever destined by his cast of mind for philosophy, it was Lessing. Yet he hardly wrote a word about philosophy itself, he did not devote a single page to it in his works, and in his letters he speaks of it almost only to Mendelssohn, confining himself to what was necessary for Mendelssohn. Can it really be that he himself, in defiance of his own nature, had such little interest in philosophy? Quite the reverse: he revealed to us what occupied his thoughts when he engraved on Gleim’s country cottage the classical ‘hen kai pân’ (one and all), while he was talking to Gleim about his ‘Grenadier Songs’ and his poem ‘Halladat’.”\*\* The point is that it was not yet time for pure philosophy to become the focus of German intellectual life—so Lessing kept silent about philosophy: the minds of his contemporaries were ready to respond to poetry, but were not yet ready for philosophy—so Lessing wrote dramas and discussed poetry.”\*\*\*

These words are almost entirely applicable to Chernyshevsky himself. True, in his ability to get to the heart of philosophical questions he could not rival the brilliant Belinsky.\*\*\*\* But nevertheless, “by his cast of mind” he possessed many qualities for an extremely fruitful study of philosophy, and he would, of course, have achieved incomparably more than, for example, P. Lavrov has managed to do. And he evidently loved philosophy: it was he who said that the man who has a philosophical spirit, who has once become interested in philosophy, will find it difficult to tear himself away from philosophy’s great questions for the sake of the relatively trivial questions of the individual sciences. But in compiling his plan of studies this “egoist”, who speaks so often about “self-interest”, was guided, like Lessing, not by his personal tastes, but by the requirements of social development. The society of his day had little interest in philosophy and a relatively strong interest in literature. This is why he devoted his early works

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\* *Works*, Vol. IX, p. 63.

\*\* [“Preussische Kriegslieder von einem Grenadier” and “Halladat oder das rote Buch”.]

\*\*\* *Works*, Vol. III, p. 755.

\*\*\*\* Chernyshevsky himself wrote that Belinsky “must be acknowledged as brilliant” (*Works*, Vol. II, p. 122).

mainly to literary questions, using his philosophical deductions to elucidate questions of this nature. Thus arose "The Aesthetic Relation of Art to Reality". Later economic and also—particularly in relation to foreign affairs—political questions appeared on the scene. And Chernyshevsky turned to these questions, which occupied far more of his time than literary questions. Thus, he had no real opportunity to devote much time to philosophy. Only the article "The Anthropological Principle" commemorates his interest in it at that time. But in other articles by him one also finds passages which show that his interest in philosophy never died and that he knew the subject well. In this respect our "advanced" writers of the subsequent period, for example, N. Mikhailovsky and his "subjective" followers, cannot bear even the remotest comparison with him.\*

N. Mikhailovsky and his "subjective" followers could only shrug their shoulders contemptuously at Hegel's "metaphysics" about which, incidentally, they did not have the faintest idea. But Chernyshevsky knew Hegel and had a very high opinion of his philosophy. This is how he describes his own attitude to Hegel and that of his teacher Feuerbach:

"We often see the continuators of a scientific work turning against their predecessors whose work served as the starting point of their own work. Thus, Aristotle looked with hostile eyes upon Plato, and Socrates infinitely belittled the Sophists, whose work he continued. Many examples will also be found in modern times. But sometimes we meet with gratifying cases when the founders of a new system clearly perceive the connection between their opinions and the ideas expressed by their predecessors, and modestly call themselves the latter's disciples. When exposing the inadequacy of their predecessors' conceptions, they nevertheless clearly say how much these conceptions have helped to develop their own ideas. Such, for example, was Spinoza's attitude towards Descartes. It must be said to the credit of the founders of present-day science that they regard their predecessors with reverence and almost with filial love; they fully recognise their genius and the nobility of their doctrines, in which they point to the germs of their own views. Mr. Chernyshevsky is

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\* The interest in philosophy, so strong here in the thirties and forties, was completely insignificant during the next four decades. What Chernyshevsky himself thought about this decline can be seen from the following passage by him: "Philosophical strivings are now all but forgotten by our literature and criticism. We do not wish to assess how much literature and criticism have gained from this forgetting—it would appear that they have gained nothing and lost a great deal" (*Works*, Vol. II, p. 183). Interest in philosophical questions has now revived again here. But our preceding and prolonged lack of concern with philosophy has resulted in the fact that each obsolete philosophical idea is greeted here like an important philosophical discovery.

aware of this and follows the example of the people whose ideas he has applied to aesthetical problems.”\*

After all that has been said by us above there can hardly be any need to repeat that by the founders of present-day science our author means Feuerbach, whose example he follows not only in his profound respect for Hegel, but also in his critical attitude towards the latter's system.

What he says about Hegel in his *Essays on the Gogol Period of Russian Literature* is not always right, but it is always intelligent and interesting. We find the following passage there, for example, which is most reminiscent of Engels' comments on the dual nature of Hegel's philosophy. “Hegel's principles were extremely powerful and broad; his deductions were narrow and feeble. Despite all his colossal genius, the great thinker possessed only enough strength to express general ideas, but not enough to adhere firmly to these principles and to make all the necessary logical deductions from them.... Not only was Hegel unable to make deductions from his principles, but the principles themselves were not altogether clear to him, they were hazy to him. The next generation of thinkers took a step forward, and the principles that were vaguely, one-sidedly and abstractly expressed by Hegel appeared in all their fullness and clarity. Then, no room remained for vacillation, duality vanished, the false conclusions introduced into science by Hegel's inconsistency in developing fundamental propositions were eliminated, and content was brought into harmony with fundamental truths.”\*\*

One can only applaud the clarity of views displayed by our author here. But when he begins to describe Hegel's dialectical method, we unfortunately remain dissatisfied. This is what he says about it:

“The essence of this method is that the thinker must not rest content with any positive deduction, but must find out whether the object about which he is thinking contains qualities and forces that are the opposite of those which the object presented to him at first sight. Thus, the thinker was obliged to examine the object from all sides, and truth appeared to him only as a consequence of a conflict between all possible conflicting opinions. Gradually, as a result of this method, the former one-sided conceptions of an object were supplanted by a full and all-sided investigation, and a living conception was obtained of all the real qualities of an object. To explain reality became the para-

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\* This passage is taken from a critical article which Chernyshevsky devoted to his own dissertation “The Aesthetic Relation” in the fifth issue of the *Sovremennik* for 1855 (*Works*, Vol. X, Part 2, p. 175).

\*\* *Works*, Vol. II, pp. 184-85. Cf. the first chapter of Engels' brochure *Ludwig Feuerbach* translated by us into Russian and published by Mr. Lvovich.<sup>95</sup>

mount duty of philosophical thought. As a result, extraordinary attention was paid to reality, which had formerly been ignored and unceremoniously distorted in order to pander to personal one-sided prejudices. Thus, conscientious, tireless search for truth took the place of the former arbitrary interpretations. In reality, however, everything depends upon circumstances, upon the conditions of place and time, and therefore, Hegel found that the former general phrases by which good and evil were judged without an examination of the circumstances and causes that gave rise to a given phenomenon, that these general, abstract aphorisms were unsatisfactory. Every object, every phenomenon, has its own significance, and it must be judged according to the circumstances, the environment, in which it exists. This rule was expressed by the formula: 'There is no abstract truth; truth is concrete,' i.e., a definitive judgment can be pronounced only about a definite fact, after examining all the circumstances upon which it depends.\*

Much of this is correct. The dialectical method is indeed quite incompatible with "general, abstract aphorisms", on the basis of which people judged phenomena—and, unfortunately, too often still do—without examining the circumstances and causes that give rise to them. And Chernyshevsky is, of course, quite right in regarding this as a great advantage of the dialectical method. But precisely because he is right in this case, it must be recognised that he was wrong in seeing the attentive attitude to reality, which obliges the thinker to examine an object from all sides, as the *main* distinctive feature of the dialectical method. An attentive attitude to reality is, of course, an essential condi-

\* *Works*, Vol. II, p. 187. In a footnote to the page quoted Chernyshevsky explains his idea as follows: "For example: 'Is rain good or bad?' This is an abstract question; a definite answer cannot be given to it. Sometimes rain is beneficial, sometimes, although more rarely, it is harmful. One must enquire specifically: 'After the grain was sown it rained heavily for five hours—was the rain useful for the crop?'—only here is the answer: 'the rain was very useful' clear and sensible.—'But that very same summer, just when harvest time arrived, it rained in torrents for a whole week—was that good for the crop?' 'The answer: 'No, the rain was harmful' is equally clear and correct. That is how all questions are decided by Hegelian philosophy. 'Is war disastrous or beneficial?' This cannot be answered definitely in general; one must know what kind of war is meant, everything depends upon the circumstances of time and place. For savage peoples, the harmfulness of war is less palpable, the benefits of it are more tangible. For civilised peoples, war usually does more harm than good. But the war of 1812,<sup>100</sup> for example, was a war of salvation for the Russian people. The Battle of Marathon was a most beneficial event in the history of mankind. Such is the meaning of the axiom: 'There is no abstract truth; truth is concrete';—a conception of an object is concrete when it presents itself with all the qualities and specific features and in the circumstances, environment, in which the object exists, and not abstracted from these circumstances and its living, specific features (as it is presented by abstract thinking, the judgment of which has, therefore, no meaning for real life)."



tion of correct thinking. But the dialectical method is characterised first and foremost by the fact that it looks for the forces which determine the development of a phenomenon in the phenomenon itself, and not in the likes and dislikes of the investigator. All the main advantages of the dialectical method amount to this, including the fact that it leaves no room "for general, abstract aphorisms based on the subjective predilection of the investigator". The dialectical method is materialist by its very nature, and under its influence even investigators with an idealist viewpoint are sometimes indisputable materialists in their arguments. The best example of this is Hegel himself, who in his philosophy of history frequently abandons the standpoint of idealism and becomes, as people who misuse Marx's terminology would now put it, an economic materialist.\* But in order to understand fully the materialist nature of the dialectical method, one must realise that its strength lies in the awareness that the course of ideas is determined by the course of things and that therefore the subjective logic of the thinker must follow the objective logic of the phenomenon under investigation. Belinsky sensed this when he wrote his article on the Borodino anniversary and when—unable "to develop the idea of negation", i.e., unable to find a theoretical justification of this idea in the objective course of social development—he sharply condemned subjective strivings divorced from reality. But precisely because Belinsky was unable "to develop the idea of negation", he was guided in his criticism of social relations more by his subjective predilections—*perfectly legitimate*, of course, and worthy of the greatest respect, but nevertheless merely subjective. He was therefore bound to overlook the main feature of the dialectical method, to which we have already referred: an awareness of the dependence of the course of ideas on the course of things. It was also overlooked, and for exactly the same reason as we shall explain below, by Chernyshevsky, who in his description of this method reduces it to a canon—as Kant would have put it—which obliges the thinker to examine the object from all sides. But the awareness of the need to examine an object from all sides is by no means equivalent to the awareness of the fact that the course of this examination must be determined totally by the logic of the development of the object itself. And the investigator who is not fully aware of this second truth may easily remain an idealist even with the most attentive attitude to the object and the most all-sided study of it. We shall see below that Chernyshevsky, who was a determined materialist in philosophy, remained an idealist in his historical and social views. In philosophy his attention was attracted

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\* For more about this see my article on Hegel's philosophy of history published in the book *A Critique of Our Critics*.<sup>101</sup>

mainly by the relation of the subject to the object. And he solved this question in a materialist way. But he had comparatively little interest in the question of the method to be adopted by the investigator who took a materialist view of the relation of the subject to the object. Therefore, while recognising the importance of the dialectical method, he was far from understanding its main advantage and consequently could not subject it to the revision which it received from Marx and Engels. Chernyshevsky was a materialist; but in his philosophical views one finds only the embryo—a perfectly viable one, it is true—of materialist dialectics. This will not surprise us if we remember that the philosophy of his teacher Feuerbach also suffered from the same defect. Only Marx and Engels, who also went through Feuerbach's school in their time, succeeded in remedying this defect and making the modern materialism a *primarily dialectical doctrine*.

But we repeat: Chernyshevsky's philosophical views already contain the viable embryo of materialist dialectics. For example, the following eloquent lines from the article, "A Criticism of the Philosophical Prejudices Against Communal Land Tenure", bear witness to this: "The constant change of forms, the constant rejection of form which has been engendered by a certain content or striving, in consequence of the strengthening of that striving, of the highest development of that content—he who has understood this great, constant, universal law, who has learned to apply it to all phenomena—oh, how calmly he takes chances which others fear to take! Repeating after the poet:

*Ich hab' mein' Sach'—auf Nichts gestellt,  
Und mir gehört die ganze Welt...\**

he has no regrets for anything that has outlived its time, and he says: come what may, there will be merrymaking in our street."\*\*

In his article on Aristotle's *Poetics*, Chernyshevsky, having shown fully how penetrating and comprehensive was Aristotle's mind, makes the following important reservation: "But in spite of his genius he often lapsed into pettiness owing to his constant striving to find a profound philosophical explanation not only of the chief phenomena, but also of all their details. This striving, expressed in the axiom of a modern philosopher, a rival of Aristotle's: 'all that is real is rational, all that is rational is real,' often compelled both thinkers to attach great importance to minor facts merely because these facts fitted well into their system."\*\*\* The modern philosopher, a rival of Aristotle's, is none other than Hegel. Thus we see that Hegel's famous proposition that all that

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\* [I took my chance on naught, and see—  
The whole world now belongs to me...]

\*\* *Works*, Vol. IV, pp. 332-33.

\*\*\* *Works*, Vol. I, p. 38.

is real is rational and all that is rational is real was regarded by Chernyshevsky as the result of the great German thinker's "pettiness" which made him seek for a profound explanation even of insignificant details. This is the best demonstration that Chernyshevsky was further from an understanding of Hegel than Belinsky, who sensed instinctively that Hegel's doctrine on the rationality of all that is real was the only possible basis for social science.

In the article "A Criticism of the Philosophical Prejudices" Chernyshevsky appears as a brilliant dialectician. But here too his dialectics is not entirely materialist. And precisely because it is not entirely materialist, because Chernyshevsky believes it possible here to examine the question of communal land tenure from the viewpoint of development in general, irrespective of the conditions of time and place—his brilliant article was interpreted by readers as a defence of *Russian* communal land tenure, which by then (the end of 1858) our author appears to have abandoned completely. But more about this below.

## Chapter Six

### The Theory of Knowledge

We have already said that various practical questions diverted Chernyshevsky from his study of philosophy. Once in exile, he was no longer able to devote his time to so-called current problems. Here he evidently gave himself up to theory, in so far as he was able to do so given the obstacles inevitable in his position and in so far as his powers were not attracted to fiction. The essays which he appended to many volumes of his translation of Weber's *Universal History* show that in Siberia he studied history a great deal and also the so-called prehistoric life of mankind. But we have direct evidence also that he continued to study philosophy and to follow the spread of philosophical views among contemporary scientists. This evidence is: firstly, the article "The Character of Human Knowledge" published in 1885 in Nos. 63 and 64 of *Russkiye Vedomosti*, and, secondly, the preface, with which we are already familiar, to the planned but not published third edition of "The Aesthetic Relation of Art to Reality".

Chernyshevsky begins the first of these articles by reducing to absurdity the "critical" view according to which we know only our perceptions of things, but not the things themselves, in consequence of which we do not know whether our perceptions of them correspond to the things themselves. He proves that this view is bound to lead to the negation of the reality of the human organism. We have a certain perception of an arm; therefore, it

must be assumed that something exists that rouses this perception in us. But does this certain something correspond to our perceptions of it? It is impossible to answer this question for certain. Perhaps it does correspond, but perhaps it does not. If it does, then the thing that we perceive as an arm really is an arm, and in that case we really do have arms. If it does not, then we have no arms: "Instead of arms we have groups of something or other unlike arms, groups of things unknown to us, but we have no arms. And we know nothing for certain about these groups except that there are two of them. We know for certain that there are two because each of our two perceptions—each of which is a separate perception of a separate arm—must have a separate basis. Hence, the existence of two groups of something leaves no room for doubt. Thus, the question as to whether we have arms or not is unanswerable. All we know is that, if we have arms, then we actually have two arms, but if we have no arms, then the number of groups of something that we have instead of arms is also not any number, but two."

Chernyshevsky calls the theory of knowledge which if logically developed must lead to the negation of the reality of the human organism illusionism. He calls it a new form of mediaeval scholastics and says that it tells the same fantastic story that scholastics once told. From the logical aspect, he explains the origin of this theory—completely in the spirit of Feuerbach—by the fact that instead of man, i.e., a material organism, an abstract being is taken, a "self" about which we know nothing except that it has a perception which comprises the content of our mental life. And if all we know about this abstract being is that it has a perception, then it is clear that we do not know whether it has a real organism with a real life of its own. But the defenders of this theory of knowledge recoil from saying categorically: we have no organism. They therefore confine themselves to an ambiguous definition, in which only the logical possibility of doubting the existence of the human organism shows through the scholastic mist. And this characterises the whole of this theory of knowledge. It amounts to ruses of scholastic syllogistics, to sophisms, to the presentation of different concepts under one term. In Chernyshevsky's brief exposition the theory of illusionism appears as follows:

"When analysing our perceptions of objects that seem to us to exist outside of our minds, we find that every one of these perceptions contains the perception of space, time and matter. When analysing our perception of space, we find that it contradicts itself. We find the same thing when we analyse our perceptions of time and matter; each of them contradicts itself. Nothing can contradict itself. Hence, nothing can correspond to our perceptions of external objects. That which we perceive as the

external world is an hallucination. Nothing corresponding to this phantom exists, nor can exist, outside of our minds. We think that we have an organism; we are mistaken, as we now see. Our perception of the existence of our organism is an hallucination; it does not, and cannot, actually exist."

But if this is so, if this theory of knowledge is simply an absurd story about the unreal mental life of a non-existent being, the question naturally arises as to why many naturalists are inclining precisely towards this theory at the present time. This is explained by the influence upon them of scholars specialising in philosophy. "Most educated people are, in general, prone to regard as coming nearest to the scientific truth those solutions of problems which are accepted as true by the majority of the specialists in the science to which these problems appertain. And like all educated people, naturalists, too, find it difficult to resist the influence of the philosophical systems that prevail among the specialists in philosophy."

The majority of specialists in philosophy adhere to illusionism. Chernyshevsky does not want to blame them for this. The character of the philosophy that predominates at any given time is determined by the general character of the intellectual and moral life of the advanced nations. In other words, specialists in philosophy are, in their turn, influenced by the social environment around them. Here one might be permitted to ask why the intellectual life of the advanced nations is developing at the present time in such a way that the absurd story of illusionism is spreading more and more in them under the guise of philosophy? Chernyshevsky does not provide an answer to this question in his article. But since it is an extremely interesting one and since to find even a *possible* answer to it from our author would help to determine the latter's world outlook, we shall return to the article "The Anthropological Principle in Philosophy".

At the beginning of this article Chernyshevsky, analysing Jules Simon's idea that today political theories are created under the influence of the social struggle, says that there is nothing surprising about this because not only political theories, but even philosophical systems have always been created under the predominant influence of social relations, and that every philosopher has been a representative of one of political parties contending for predominance in the society of his day. Our author does not consider it necessary to point to thinkers who have made a special study of the philosophy of politics, because their affiliation to political parties is obvious. Hobbes was an absolutist, Locke was a Whig, Milton was a republican, Montesquieu was a liberal after the English taste, etc. He turns to the so-called philosophers proper and maintains that they were subject to the same influence. "Kant belonged to the party that wanted to

enthroned liberty in Germany in a revolutionary way, but abhorred terroristic methods. Fichte went a few steps farther; he was not afraid even of terroristic methods. Schelling was a representative of the party that was terrified by the revolution and sought tranquillity in mediaeval institutions, that wanted to restore in Germany the feudal state that had been destroyed by Napoleon I and the Prussian patriots, whose spokesman Fichte had been. Hegel was a moderate liberal, he was extremely conservative in his deductions; but he adopted revolutionary principles for the struggle against extreme reaction in the hope of preventing the development of the revolutionary spirit, which served him as a weapon for the purpose of overthrowing that which was old and too antiquated. Our point is not that these people held such convictions as private individuals, that would not be so very important, but that their philosophical systems were thoroughly permeated with the spirit of those political parties to which the authors of these systems belonged. To say that what is the case today was not always the case in the past, to say that only now have philosophers begun to build their systems under the influence of political convictions, is extremely naive....”\*

Leaving aside the descriptions of individual philosophers given here, one thing only can be added to what Chernyshevsky has said here: the political struggle itself, which determined the direction of philosophical thought, was conducted not because of some abstract principles, but under the direct influence of the needs and aspirations of those sections of society to which the contending political parties belonged. But Chernyshevsky himself would not have disputed this. Below, in our description of his historical views, we shall see that he was able—occasionally, at least—to see clearly the influence of a thinker's class position on the development of his thought. In view of this we have the right to assume that he associated the present state of philosophy with the class position of the people who make a special study of it. In other words, it is most likely that Chernyshevsky established a causal connection between the extensive dissemination of philosophical “illusionism” at the present time and the decline of the social class whose ideologists are, for the most part,

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\* *Works*, Vol. VI, p. 180. In the article “The Origin of the Theory of the Beneficial Nature of the Struggle for Life”, which we shall discuss below, Chernyshevsky even establishes a connection between the development of naturalist theories and the development of social relations and aspirations. In the final years of the eighteenth and the first few decades of the nineteenth century most naturalists turned away from the theory of the mutability of species, “obeying the spirit of the times which sought to restore tradition”. The main opponent of the theory of transformism at that time, Cuvier, “was in natural science a representative of the trend of thought which Napoleon sought to make predominant in intellectual life and which gained dominion over it during the Restoration” (*Works*, Vol. X, Part 2, pp. 23 and 21).

the philosophers of our day. And if this is so, it emerges that our author understood the dependence of philosophical thought on social life far better than our present "critics of Marx", who fail to see that the ideology of the proletariat cannot possibly merge into a single organic whole with philosophical doctrines borrowed from the ideology of the declining bourgeoisie. It is true that these "critics" themselves belong to the "illusionists".

How well Chernyshevsky understood the present sad state of philosophical thought may be seen from his preface to the third edition of "The Aesthetic Relation". There, having expressed his regret at the fact the majority of naturalists today are repeating "Kant's metaphysical theory about the subjectivity of our knowledge", he adds:

"When the naturalists stop talking such metaphysical nonsense they will become capable of working out, and probably will work out, on the basis of natural science, a system of conceptions that will be more exact and fuller than those expounded by Feuerbach. Meanwhile, the exposition of the scientific conceptions of the so-called fundamental problems of human inquiry made by Feuerbach remains the best."\*

But when will the naturalists stop talking metaphysical nonsense? Evidently only when there is a change in the social relations under the influence of which the "educated classes" fear materialism as a philosophical truth which is quite incompatible with their social interests. Chernyshevsky himself realised that this would not be soon. This is why he preferred "meanwhile" to adhere to Feuerbach's viewpoint. And he was quite right in his way: by comparison with the various Machs, Avenariuses, Cliffords and Bergsons Feuerbach is still the representative of the most profound and the most contemporary philosophical theory—i.e., the one which corresponds best to the present state of natural science. True, Feuerbach's philosophy was subjected to a subsequent and highly fruitful reshaping by Marx and Engels. In this respect in some of its parts it is already a "superseded stage" of philosophical development. But this aspect of the matter remained, as everything shows, unknown to our author. The blame for this must, of course, be placed not on him, but on the conditions in which he lived during the latter half of his life.

Let us return to the article "The Character of Human Knowledge", however. In it Chernyshevsky asks: "But what is this system of transforming our knowledge of nature into a mirage with the aid of the mirages of scholastic syllogistics? Do the adherents of illusionism really regard it as a system of serious thought?" To this he replies that there are, of course, some cranks among the illusionists who take their allegedly philosophical system serious-

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\* *Works*, Vol. X, Part 2, Section 1, p. 196.

ly. But in the majority of cases they themselves do not attach any serious significance to it. Their attitude to their own philosophical system could be expressed in roughly the following words: "Philosophical truth is philosophical truth and not any other kind. From the mundane point of view it is not truth; nor is it from the scientific point of view. That is to say, they love to indulge in fantasy. And they know that they are indulging in fantasy."\*

This is beautifully apt. The serious representatives of "illusionism" do regard their own philosophical views in this way. But there are incomparably more "cranks", who take these views seriously, than Chernyshevsky thought. Who would say that our Bogdanovs, Valentinovs, Yushkeviches, Bermans and tutti frutti\*\* are not serious about what they imagine to be the most advanced philosophical truth of our time? We consider that they honestly believe what they say. And how many of them there are in Russia now, and not only in Russia! Yes, there are far more cranks in the world than even Chernyshevsky thought who, as we know, exaggerated the role of self-interest in human behaviour.

In parting with the "illusionists" Chernyshevsky formulates his own view of the character of human knowledge: "Our knowledge is human knowledge. Man's cognitive powers are limited, as are all his powers. In this sense of the term, the character of our knowledge is determined by the character of our cognitive powers. If our sense organs were more perceptive, and if our mind were stronger, we would know more than we know now; and, of course, some of our present knowledge would be different if our knowledge were broader than it is now. In general, the broadening of knowledge is accompanied by a change in some of our former stock of knowledge. The history of science tells us that very much of our previous knowledge has changed because we know more now than we did before."\*\*\*

But although very much of our previous knowledge has changed, its essential character remains unchanged in so far as it was *factual* knowledge. As an example Chernyshevsky takes the broadening of our knowledge of water.

Now we know thanks to the thermometer the exact temperature at which water boils and at which it freezes. People did not know this before. The extent of our knowledge of water has broadened. But in what sense has it changed? Only in the sense that it has become more definite than it was before, because formerly people knew only that water boils when it gets very hot and freezes when it gets cold. Later chemistry revealed to us that water is a compound of oxygen and hydrogen. This was not known before.

\* Ibid., Section 4, p. 10.

\*\* [all sorts]

\*\*\* Ibid., pp. 10-11.



But water has not ceased to be water because we have learned of its chemical composition. And all the knowledge that people had of water before the discovery of its chemical composition remains true after that discovery as well. "The only change the new knowledge brought about in the old was that it added the definition of the composition of water," says Chernyshevsky.

It is in the nature of human beings to err. Therefore each of us—in everyday affairs, as in science—must be very careful and circumspect to avoid making blunders. Caution is necessary. But Chernyshevsky insists that there must be a limit to caution as well. "Reason tests everything," he says. "But every educated man possesses considerable knowledge which has already been tested by his reason, and has proved to be such that he cannot subject it to the slightest doubt while he remains a man of sound mind."\*

We shall conclude our description of this article by pointing to the following remark made by our author in passing: "scholastics is chiefly dialectics".\*\* This remark is highly characteristic of a thinker in whose philosophical views the dialectical element was, as we have already said, insufficiently developed. One might think that in Chernyshevsky's opinion—and contrary to everything that he said about the dialectical method in the *Essays on the Gogol Period of Russian Literature*—dialectics amounted to simply playing with logical concepts. But if scholastics was in a certain sense—i.e., in the sense of the analysis of concepts—dialectics, it should not be forgotten that this dialectics was the "handmaid of theology" and precisely because of that would not and could not pronounce judgment on the main propositions on the basis of which it carried out its logical operations. Its dependent position frequently turned it into sophistry; but essentially—as Hegel rightly remarked and as Chernyshevsky himself would seem to have thought when he was writing his *Essays on the Gogol Period*—it has nothing in common with sophistry, because it shows the inadequacy of the abstract rational definitions on the inevitable one-sidedness of which all sophistry rests.\*\*\* We shall

\* Ibid., p. 15.

\*\* Ibid., p. 9.

\*\*\* Cf. Hegel: "Die Dialektik ist nun ferner nicht mit der blossen Sophistik zu verwechseln, deren Wesen gerade darin besteht, einseitige und abstrakte Bestimmungen in ihrer Isolierung für sich geltend zu machen, je nachdem solches das jedesmalige Interesse des Individuums und seiner besondern Lage mit sich bringt.... Die Dialektik ist von solchem Thun wesentlich verschieden, denn diese geht gerade darauf aus, die Dinge an und für sich zu betrachten, wobei sich sodann die Endlichkeit der einseitigen Verstandesbestimmungen ergibt" (G. Hegel, *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften*, 1-er Theil, Berlin, 1843, S. 153). ["Further, dialectics is not to be confused with mere sophistry, the essence of which lies in the fact that it advances one-sided and abstract definitions in isolation, depending on which of these definitions is required at any given moment by the interests of the individual

see shortly how unfavourably certain judgments by Chernyshevsky himself were affected by this insufficiently attentive attitude of his to the nature of dialectics.

### Chapter Seven

#### The Beneficial Nature of the Struggle for Life

As already mentioned above, on his return from exile Chernyshevsky wrote, inter alia, on the question of transformism. His article, signed "An old transformist" and entitled "*The Origin of the Theory of the Beneficial Nature of the Struggle for Life (Preface to Certain Treatises on Botany and Zoology and the Sciences of Human Life)*", has no direct bearing on what he called philosophy proper, i.e., on "the theory of solving the most general questions of science, which are usually called metaphysical questions, for example, questions of the relationship between spirit and matter, the freedom of the human will, the immortality of the soul, etc."\*. The author devoted it to a criticism of Darwin's theory, and we could invite specialists in biology to judge how effective this criticism is. But an article dealing with what might be called the philosophy of biology is bound to contain certain general philosophical concepts which are of considerable interest to more than biologists alone. Such concepts are to be found in the article in question by Chernyshevsky, and therefore we consider it worthy of examination in this chapter.

Chernyshevsky calls Darwin's theory the theory of the beneficial nature of the struggle for life and is extremely critical of it. This sharply negative attitude makes itself felt right at the beginning of the article. Chernyshevsky announces there that the theory in question has as its basis "a logically brilliant idea": harm does good. Since this idea, in Chernyshevsky's opinion, is quite absurd, the deductions which proceed from it are also absurd. "The theory of the beneficial nature of the struggle for life," says our author, "contradicts all the facts of each branch of science to which it is applied and, in particular, it contradicts most flagrantly all the facts of those branches of botany and zoology, for which it was devised and from which it has spread to the sciences of the human life.

"It contradicts the meaning of all human rational everyday toil and, in particular, it contradicts most flagrantly the mean-

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and his particular position.... Dialectics differs fundamentally from such doings, for it aims at examining things in themselves and for themselves (i.e., according to their own nature.—G. P.), in the course of which the finite nature of one-sided rational definitions is revealed."

\* *Works*, Vol. VI, p. 193, note.

ing of all the facts of agriculture, beginning with the early concern of savages to protect the animals tamed by them from hunger and other calamities and with their first efforts to loosen the soil for sowing with sharpened sticks."\*

Basing his arguments on certain words from Darwin, Chernyshevsky maintains that the theory of the struggle for life was borrowed by the famous English naturalist from Malthus, who wrote his notorious book *An Essay on the Principle of Population* to please the upper classes of English society. Darwin, however, did not understand Malthus correctly. In his book Malthus endeavoured to prove that people's calamities are a consequence of their excessive reproduction. But it would never have occurred to Malthus to call the calamities which result from excessive reproduction beneficial. He regarded them as calamities and nothing else. In applying Malthus' idea to biology, however, Darwin assumed that the calamities caused among living organisms by their mutual struggle for existence become a source of blessing to them, i.e., of progress which consists of the improvement of their organisation. Darwin in general adhered to the manner of thinking, according to which calamities are considered blessings or, at least, sources of blessings. "Such a way of interpreting things is called optimistic," says Chernyshevsky. "In adhering to this manner of thinking and not admitting the possibility of a different one, Darwin was convinced that Malthus thought as he did about calamities, that he considered them blessings or sources of blessings. The calamities of which Malthus speaks—hunger, disease, fights over food caused by hunger, murders committed to satisfy hunger, death from hunger—are obviously not blessings in themselves for those who experience them; and since they are obviously not blessings, it followed, according to Darwin, that they should be considered sources of blessings. Thus it came about that in Darwin the calamities of which Malthus speaks are supposed to produce good results, and the root cause of these calamities, excessive reproduction, should be considered the root cause of all that is good in the history of organic beings, the source of the perfectionment of organisation, the force which has produced from unicellular organisms such flora as the rose, the lime and the oak, such fauna as the swallow, the swan and the eagle, the lion, the elephant and the gorilla. On the basis of this convenient interpretation of the idea borrowed from Malthus the theory of the beneficial nature of the struggle for life was formulated in Darwin's imagination."\*\* Darwin committed a grave scientific error in assuming that nature acts like a farmer who keeps the animals that have the qualities he requires and kills those that

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\* *Works*, Vol. X, Part 2 [Section 4, p. 16].

\*\* *Ibid.*, p. 43.

do not. In fact, the farmer does not behave at all like nature: "whereas, for example, he axes the heads of the cows he is killing, he does not axe the heads of those he is keeping". But what do we see in nature? "The most common form of natural selection is the extinction of superfluous creatures from a lack of food; is it only dying creatures who suffer from hunger in this case? No, all of them. Does the farmer behave thus with his herd? Would his herd improve, if he reduced reproduction by making all his animals starve? The animals that survived would grow weak and ill, the herd would deteriorate."\*

Chernyshevsky calls Darwin's theory of the struggle for existence a theory worthy of Torquemada, and says that when rough, ignorant, bad boys torment a mouse they do not think that they are acting for the good of mice, but Darwin teaches them to think so: "Look, pray: the mice are running away from the boys; thanks to this they are developing speed and agility of movement, their muscles and power of breathing are developing, and their whole organisation is being improved. Yes, bad boys, cats, kites and owls are the benefactors of mice. Is this really the case?"\*\* Chernyshevsky says that this is by no means the case: the mice's organism is weakened by excessive running, just as it is weakened when the mice try to avoid their enemies by hiding in stuffy holes. And this deterioration of the organism, which increases from generation to generation, leads to *degeneration*. And since degeneration is an undisputed evil, natural selection is also an evil and not a blessing at all. The more organisms are changed by the operation of natural selection, the more they degenerate. If this selection were the predominant influence in the history of organic beings, there could be no improvement of organisation, and since there has been such an improvement, it is clear that there was some force or some combination of forces that opposed and outbalanced the operation of natural selection. Some of these forces were discovered by the transformists who preceded Darwin. More will be discovered with time. But regardless of the discoveries which have been or will be made in this respect, Chernyshevsky does not doubt that the forces which improve the structure of the organic being must be forces which promote "the good functioning of its organism and, if this being has the capacity for sensation, arouse in it by their operation a sense of physical and moral well-being, contentment with life and joy".\*\*\* Such is our author's final conclusion. In his opinion Darwin was splendid as a "monographer", but not as a theoretician of transformism. Among the theoreticians of transformism Chernyshevsky evidently gave pride of place to Lamarck, whose *Philosophie zoologique*

\* Ibid., p. 35.

\*\* Ibid., pp. 43-44.

\*\*\* Ibid., p. 46.

he calls a brilliant work.\* Among the criticisms which Chernyshevsky made of Darwin one of the most prominent was that Darwin did not know the doctrines of the transformists who preceded him, i.e., inter alia, of Lamarck himself.\*\*

Here we are compelled, first and foremost, to make a factual correction. Darwin praises Lamarck's works highly in an historical note which precedes the introduction to his book on the origin of species. Here too he speaks of other of his predecessors. We do not have the first edition of this book at hand and therefore cannot check whether the note in question was in this edition. It is highly likely that it was not and that its absence explains Chernyshevsky's criticism that Darwin ignored the works of earlier transformists. But, in our opinion, the absence of this note in the first edition would not prove that before the publication of this edition, i.e., before November 1859, Darwin was unfamiliar with the works of Lamarck and at least a few other earlier transformists. True, in his note Darwin refers to "Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire's excellent history" (*Histoire naturelle générale*), dated 1859. But he does not say that it was only from here that he learned of Lamarck's ideas: he says merely that he borrowed information from it about the date when Lamarck's first work was published. This is, of course, not the same thing: one can know a writer's ideas well, without being aware of when his first work was actually published. But let us suppose that in working on his book Darwin remained completely ignorant of his predecessors. There is nothing good about this, of course; but one must be fair: a great many writers are, unfortunately, guilty of this. Thus, for example, Feuerbach himself, whom Chernyshevsky regarded so highly, had a poor knowledge of the history of materialism, i.e., of the very doctrine which he embraced after breaking with the absolute idealism of Hegel: he ridiculed "La Mettrie's pâté aux truffes" in the very work in which his materialist views took the form closest to French materialism. Yet Chernyshevsky would hardly have accused his beloved teacher of being superficial on these grounds. And he would have been right, for no matter how regrettable such gaps in the knowledge of people studying broad theoretical questions may be, their presence does not exclude the possibility of a serious attitude towards the subject. Feuerbach's attitude was precisely this, and the same attitude was equally characteristic of Darwin, to whom Chernyshevsky is so unfair.

Chernyshevsky formulates the question of the importance of natural selection in the history of the development of animal and plant species differently from Darwin. It never occurred to Darwin to wonder whether or not the indisputable scientific fact of the

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\* Ibid., p. 22.

\*\* Ibid., p. 41.

struggle for life between living organisms should be regarded as an "evil". And he probably gave just as little thought to whether or not the consequences of this struggle should be regarded as a "blessing". For him the question was whether natural selection promotes or hinders the adaptation of animals to the conditions of their existence. And the only possible answer to the question formulated in this way was an affirmative one: yes, natural selection must inevitably promote such adaptation. Chernyshevsky's example of the mouse is most unconvincing. Of course, cases when the given natural conditions are in general totally unfavourable for the existence of a certain species are perfectly possible, even inevitable. It is then that what Chernyshevsky calls the degeneration and what it would perhaps be more correct to call the disappearance of this species begins. Darwin does not deny the possibility and inevitability of such cases. Yet when the natural conditions are not sufficiently unfavourable to lead to the disappearance of a whole species, but are intolerable for individual members, less adapted to them, it is obviously only the ones that are more adapted that survive. Is the process of this adaptation a process of the improvement of the species in question, i.e., will the organisation of the members belonging to it become more complex? Darwin says neither "yes" nor "no": for him everything here depends on the circumstances. The process by which parasites adapt to special conditions of their existence is more often a process in which their organisation is "deteriorated", i.e., *simplified*. So far conditions of life on earth have favoured the appearance of species with an increasingly "improved" organisation. But this indisputable fact does not change the essential content of Darwin's theory. The latter would remain essentially the same if conditions of life—say, for example, as a result of the increasing cooling of our planet—were unfavourable for complex organisms. Then the process of adaptation to the environment would be a process of the simplification of the organisation of living organisms. And nothing else. The concept of "the organism best adapted to the environment" is by no means identified by Darwin with the concept of "the most complex organism".

That Darwin exaggerated the role of natural selection in the development of species will hardly be disputed today. But, in criticising the English biologist, our author had a far more simplified picture of this role than Darwin himself. Chernyshevsky says that the most common form of natural selection is the extinction of superfluous organisms from lack of food. But Darwin did not think so. He said: "The amount of food for each species of course gives the extreme limit to which each can increase; but very frequently it is not the obtaining of food, but the serving as prey to other animals, which determines the average numbers

of a species."\* Had Chernyshevsky paid attention to these words of Darwin's, he would probably have regarded the importance of natural selection differently. Let us suppose that among the members of a given species who are subjected to constant attack by beasts of prey there have begun to appear some whose colouring was less noticeable to the enemy. These members would have more chance of escaping the clutches of their predators. They would survive, whereas those members whose colouring was more noticeable would perish. Heredity would transmit the favourable feature to the offspring of the surviving members and in this way there would come a time when all the members of the given species would have the colouring that promotes their survival. This case is not similar to Chernyshevsky's example of the mouse: here selection does not "axe the heads" of all the members of the species, and Darwin devotes considerable space in his theory to cases which are similar to the one quoted by us. Let us take another example. Wallace says that on the Island of Madeira many of the insects have completely or almost completely lost their wings, whereas insects of the same species on the continent of Europe still possess fully developed wings. Wallace explains this phenomenon by the fact that Madeira, like many oceanic islands in the temperate zone, often experiences sudden hurricanes, as a result of which insects which possess wings and, of course, use them for flying are in danger of being carried out to sea. "Thus," says Wallace, "over the years those which possessed short wings, or used their wings least, were conserved, and, consequently, a terrestrial species, which was apteral or possessed imperfect wings, was produced."\*\* Here again natural selection does not "axe the heads" of all the members of the given species, and here too it promotes their adaptation to the natural conditions of their existence. One might quote a whole multitude of such examples. And had Chernyshevsky paid attention to them, he would hardly have tried to vindicate his idea that Darwin's theory of the struggle for life "contradicts all the facts of those branches of botany and zoology, for which it was devised and from which it has spread to the sciences of the human life".

It is quite true that "the theory of the struggle for existence has spread to the sciences of the human life" by no means to the benefit of these sciences. And one might think that Chernyshevsky's obvious irritation with Darwin, which found expression, *inter alia*, in his remark that Darwin's theory is worthy

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\* *L'origine des espèces*. Trad. par E. Barbier, p. 74. [Plekhanov is quoting from the French translation of Charles Darwin's *The Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection*. [We are quoting from the original, 6th Ed., London, John Murray, 1875, p. 53.]

\*\* *Le Darwinisme*, par Alfred Russel Wallace, Paris, 1891, pp. 138-39.

of Torquemada, is explained primarily by the harmful influence of so-called Darwinism on the development of the social sciences.<sup>102</sup> But Darwin must not be held responsible for the blunders of the Darwinists. His theory of the struggle for life can by no means serve as a justification of the "war of each against all" which has been propagated by certain Darwinist sociologists. Darwin believed that the development of social instincts was "extremely useful" for the survival of a species in its struggle for existence. Apply this idea of his to social relations, and you have something that is directly opposed to the extreme individualism which is the inevitable logical conclusion of the doctrines of Darwinist sociologists. Of course, Darwin himself had little understanding of social questions. This, as Engels remarked in his dispute with Dühring,\* explains the fact that he accepted Malthus' teaching on population without the slightest criticism. But his great intellect saved him from the extremes to which many of his followers succumbed. It is also true that Darwin might perhaps be taken for an ordinary Manchester man when, in discussing the life of human societies, he says: "There should be open competition for all men; and the most able should not be prevented by laws or customs from succeeding best and rearing the largest number of offspring."\*\* And everything indicates that he did in fact incline towards Manchesterism, which he appears to have regarded as an advanced social theory. This was a mistake; but this mistake says nothing against the method which Darwin used to study the phenomena of organic life. And it would be wrong for those who support the social war of each against all to quote his words on competition. There is competition and competition. The followers of Saint-Simon also supported competition, but it was precisely for the sake of competition that they demanded a radical change in property relations.

We do not consider it necessary to analyse further Chernyshevsky's view on Darwin's theory. After what has been said by us concerning this view, it will suffice to draw the reader's attention to Chernyshevsky's ironical attitude towards Darwin's optimism. He ascribes to Darwin the belief that all evil invariably leads to good. Against this optimism he sets his own idea that harm is always harmful and never beneficial. We shall encounter this idea again when examining Chernyshevsky's historical views. We shall then dwell on it longer and, among other things, attempt to solve the question of the extent to which it is compatible with Hegel's proposition—of which Chernyshevsky greatly approved,

\* *Herrn Eugen Dührings Umwälzung der Wissenschaft*, fifth edition, p. 60.

\*\* *Collected Works*, Vol. II. Translation into Russian by Sechenov, St. Petersburg, 1899, p. 420. [Plekhanov is quoting from the Russian translation of Charles Darwin's *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex*. We are quoting from the original, London, John Murray, 1887, p. 618.]



as we have seen above—that *there is no abstract truth, that truth is always concrete and that everything depends on the circumstances of time and place*. For the moment, however, we shall say that Chernyshevsky himself did not always reason according to the formula: "harm is always harmful; only good is good". In the second dream of Vera Pavlovna he makes her mother, Maria Alexeyevna, say: "You just listen to what I tell you, Vera, my girl. You are educated, educated on the money I stole. You think about good, but if I hadn't been bad you wouldn't know what good is. See?"\* Hence it follows that evil too occasionally produces good results. And in this case Chernyshevsky is in full agreement with Maria Alexeyevna. Continuing her explanation with her daughter, Maria Alexeyevna repeats: "You see, she [she is referring to herself here in the third person.—*G.P.*] had bad thoughts, but out of them came good for someone: it was good for you, wasn't it? But it's not the same with other bad people."\*\* Here Chernyshevsky himself is speaking through Maria Alexeyevna. And if what he is saying is right—which it is—it follows here too that evil does not always have evil consequences. And this contradicts the abstract proposition in accordance with which Chernyshevsky criticised Darwin. Incidentally, we think it worth repeating that Darwin himself never connected the question of natural selection with arguments about good and evil. And rightly so, of course.

But whatever Chernyshevsky's errors in this individual case and whatever the general shortcomings characteristic of his method as a whole, he was nevertheless one of the finest thinkers who have appeared in our literature. The weak side of his philosophical views was the insufficient elaboration in them of the dialectical element, which was also the weak side of the system of his teacher Feuerbach. Chernyshevsky was not familiar with the philosophy of Marx and Engels which grew out of Feuerbach's philosophy. And since the philosophy of Marx and Engels was undoubtedly a great step forward by comparison with Feuerbach's system, it can be said that our author was, unfortunately, unaware of the latest developments in philosophical thought. But at the time they were known to only a few even in the West. And if one does not compare Chernyshevsky's views with those of Marx and Engels, if one contrasts them only with the views of, say, P. L. Lavrov and other of his more or less progressive contemporaries, one is bound to admit that Chernyshevsky was far ahead of them and that, when he retired from the scene, a *period of decline* began in our literature in respect of philosophy—and, unfortunately, not of philosophy alone. One of the symp-

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\* *Works*, Vol. IX, p. 113.

\*\* *Ibid.*, p. 114.]

toms of this decline was subsequently the notorious subjectivism of Nikolai Mikhailovsky, whom many people quite seriously rank on a level with Chernyshevsky to this day. In fact, particularly in philosophy, Mikhailovsky was a dwarf by comparison with the author of the article "The Anthropological Principle".

Chernyshevsky is known in our country as a publicist, and also as a literary historian, i.e., as the author of the *Essays on the Gogol Period* and articles on Lessing, but he is quite unknown as a philosopher. This is explained, firstly, by the fact that he wrote little on philosophy, and, secondly, by his manner of expounding his ideas. He wrote so simply and clearly that some of his readers naively refused precisely for this reason to regard that which he expounded in the article "The Anthropological Principle" as philosophy. This is not an assumption, but a fact, albeit a ridiculous one: such readers existed at that time. And here is proof. When an analysis of Lavrov's philosophy by Antonovich appeared in the 4th issue of the *Sovremennik* for 1861, *Otechestvenniye Zapiski* remarked scornfully: "No mental effort is needed to understand everything that Mr. Antonovich says. The clarity of this article amazed everyone." Quoting this remark by the journal which was polemicising with him, Chernyshevsky for his part wrote: "You have heard so often that philosophy is a puzzling subject. You have tried to read philosophical articles, like the works of Mr. Lavrov, and have understood nothing at all. And Mr. Lavrov was, in your opinion, a good philosopher. So your mind has constructed a syllogism like this: 'I do not understand philosophy; consequently, that which I can understand is not philosophy.'"\* By virtue of this syllogism not even those pages of Chernyshevsky which had the most direct bearing on philosophy were considered philosophical: they had too clear an exposition. It need hardly be added that there is still no end of "clever readers"<sup>108</sup> in our country who judge philosophical articles on the basis of the syllogism pointed out by Chernyshevsky. This reminds us of the anecdote about the man who was suffering from toothache and had the bad tooth extracted easily and quickly by a dentist in the capital. "What do I owe you?" asked the patient. "A ruble," replied the dentist. "A ruble!" exclaimed the man. "Our local dentist dragged me round his surgery for a whole hour trying to pull out a bad tooth, and he only took a quarter, but you extracted it straightaway and you want a ruble!" Chernyshevsky argued in vain with naive readers: "Whatever the subject discussed by a person whose way of thinking is obscure [a reference to Lavrov.—G.P.], his speech will be obscure, puzzling. But in itself philosophy is perhaps not such

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\* *Works*, Vol. VIII, pp. 266-67.

a totally incomprehensible science."\* Naive readers did not believe this and still do not. To this day if you ask the average Russian "intellectual" whether Lavrov and Vladimir Solovyov were philosophers, you will immediately hear: of course, they were. And if you tell such an "intellectual" that Chernyshevsky was also a philosopher and a far more profound one than Lavrov and Solovyov, you will astound him greatly. Chernyshevsky's philosophy was not sufficiently obscure....

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\* Ibid., p. 267.

## SECTION TWO

### N. G. CHERNYSHEVSKY'S HISTORICAL VIEWS

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#### *Chapter One*

#### History and Natural Science

In examining Chernyshevsky's historical views it will be useful first of all to see how he regarded the state of historical research in his day. The following passage from his article on Granovsky gives a good indication of this:

"The more closely we examine the works which have been written up to the present on history, the more we realise that we have only an idea of what this science should be, and we can barely see as yet the first one-sided attempts to put this idea into practice. We shall not consider the reasons why practice is lagging so far behind theory in this case: that would take us too far from the subject; we would say only that, on the one hand, difficulty is presented by the scarcity and unprocessed nature of historical material for those elements of life which have so far been ignored. On the other hand, perhaps the most important obstacle is the narrow, abstract nature of the common view of human life. Anthropology is only just beginning to assert its supremacy over abstract moralising and one-sided psychology."\*

Note that here too Chernyshevsky is striving to adopt the viewpoint of "anthropology". We already know that the philosophy of Feuerbach and Chernyshevsky, which proclaimed the "anthropological" principle, saw the same things in man as the natural sciences saw in him. Chernyshevsky wants history, in its turn, to regard man from the viewpoint of natural science. "Given the extraordinary importance which the natural side of human life plays in life and should acquire in history," he says, "it is understandable that the influence of the natural sciences on history must become immeasurably strong with time. At present very few historians sense this. Granovsky is one of them." In order to explain his view on the method of research of historical phenomena, Chernyshevsky points to Guizot who, he says, is superior to all other historians of our time. Guizot's lectures on the history of civilisation<sup>104</sup> suffered from the drawback that, apart from political history, they concentrated solely on the intellectual

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\* *Works*, Vol. II, p. 410.

life of the nation, and that not in its entirety. The programme of these lectures contains no mention of the material aspect of life. Guizot wishes to write a history of man's inner life and his relations with other people. He forgets about man's relation with nature. "But," says Chernyshevsky, "the springs of human life lie in nature, and the whole of life is fundamentally determined by relations with nature."\*

Here Chernyshevsky would appear to be wrong in his criticism of Guizot. Guizot's lectures on the history of civilisation, to which Chernyshevsky refers, do in fact pay too little attention to the material aspect of the life of nations; but if Chernyshevsky had turned to other works by the same historian, for example, his *Essais sur l'histoire de France*, he would have seen that Guizot by no means neglected the material aspect of the life of nations, but, quite the reverse, attributed predominant influence to it. Guizot said: "In order to understand political institutions, we must study the various strata existing in a society and their mutual relations. In order to understand these various social strata, we must know the nature and the relations of landed property."\*\*

To study the nature and the relations of landed property is not to ignore the material aspect of social life. But here we must make a terminological reservation.

The expression "the material aspect of life" is used here by Chernyshevsky in a different sense from that in which we use it in speaking of Guizot's historical views. The agrarian system which exists in a given country characterises not people's relation to nature, but their own mutual relations within society. Whereas Chernyshevsky understands by the material aspect of life the relations which exist between man and nature. This is a very great and extremely fundamental difference. But we shall see shortly that our author's subsequent arguments relating to this subject eliminate this difference almost completely.

Why does Chernyshevsky attach such great importance to the question of the relation between man and nature? He explains this with a long quotation from Granovsky's Speech on the Present State and Significance of Universal History which was delivered at an official meeting of Moscow University on January 12, 1852. As this quotation is most important for a description of Chernyshevsky's view of interest to us here, we shall reproduce it in part at least.

Granovsky said: "The geographical surveys which we have mentioned are rarely linked organically with the exposition that follows. Having prefaced his work with a brief sketch of the country he is describing and its products, the historian turns

\* Ibidem, note.

\*\* *Essais*, 2-e édition, Paris, 1860, pp. 75-76. For more detail on this see Chapter II of my book *The Development of the Monist View of History*.<sup>106</sup>

with a clear conscience to other, more familiar subjects, thinking that he has satisfied completely the modern requirements of science. As if the action of nature upon man were not constant, as if it did not change with each great step he takes along the path of education. We are still far from a knowledge of all the mysterious threads that bind a nation to the land on which it has grown up and from which it borrows not only the means of physical subsistence, but a considerable part of its moral qualities. The distribution of the products of nature over the surface of the globe is very closely linked with the fate of civil societies. A single plant sometimes conditions the whole life of a nation. The history of Ireland would undoubtedly have been different, if the potato were not the main food of its population. The same may be said about certain animals for other countries."\*

Later in the speech there is a most important reference to an article by Academician Ber on the influence of external nature on the social relations of individual peoples and on the history of mankind. The very title of this article shows that Ber wished to examine the connection between man and nature primarily from the point of view of the influence of natural conditions on social relations. And Granovsky himself has exactly the same influence in mind, when he points out that the whole history of certain countries depends on their flora and fauna. True, he also speaks of certain mysterious threads "that bind a nation to the land" and even determine its moral propensities.

Here one might think that Granovsky recognises the direct influence of nature on mutual relations between people in society. Particularly because on one of the earlier pages he does not refuse to acknowledge as a deduction of natural science "the historical impotence of whole species which are not destined for the noblest forms of civil life".\*\* But Chernyshevsky, who was later, as we shall see below, a most resolute opponent of the theory of race, could hardly have inclined towards this theory in the slightest even at the time when he wrote his article on Granovsky, i.e., in 1856.\*\*\* It is most likely that Granovsky's speech appealed to him not because of its readiness to recognise the historical impotence of certain human species, but because of its insistence on the dependence of the social relations of nations on the natural conditions of their existence. And if this is so, Chernyshevsky's idea of the influence of nature on man is very close to our view

\* This passage is on p. 34 of Volume I of Granovsky's *Works*, 1866 ed.

\*\* Ibid., p. 33.

\*\*\* A year earlier, in a bibliographical note on N. Kalachev's «Архив историко-юридических сведений» [*Archive of Historico-juridical Information*], he pointed to the falsity of "all teutonomanias, gallomanias, anglomanias, czechomanias, bulgaromanias" (*Works*, I, 428). From here it is, so to say, but a stone's throw to a negative attitude towards the whole theory of race.

on the same subject: natural conditions influence people, determining their mutual relations in society. This view was brilliantly formulated by Marx several years before Granovsky delivered his speech on the state and significance of universal history at Moscow University. "In production," wrote Marx in his brochure *Wage Labour and Capital*, "men enter into relation not only with nature. They produce only by cooperating in a certain way and mutually exchanging their activities. In order to produce, they enter into definite connections and relations with one another and only within these social connections and relations does their relation with nature, does production, take place."\* The mutual relations between people in the production process are determined by the state of the productive forces, which in their turn depend most closely on the natural conditions of existence of a given nation, i.e., on the geographical environment in which it lives. Such is the conclusion arrived at by science in its study of the question of the influence of nature on "social man". This conclusion was evidently not fully clear to Granovsky. Chernyshevsky too, at the time when he began to apply the "anthropological" principle to history, was undoubtedly unclear about it in some important respects. But be that as it may, the logical development of the view of Granovsky and Chernyshevsky was bound to lead to the afore-mentioned deduction by Marx. And since Guizot for his part was nearing this deduction, although he by no means made it fully, Chernyshevsky was wrong to accuse him of disregarding the material aspect of life. But the important thing for us here is not whether Chernyshevsky was right or wrong in his view of Guizot, but that his right or wrong view of Guizot characterised his own historical views. This is why we shall return again to an examination of this view. For the moment, however, we stress once again the fact that in the name of his "anthropological" principle our author already at the very beginning of his literary activity demanded that historians pay close attention to the "material aspect of the life" of nations. The whole question of the subsequent development of his historical views is basically that of how he himself saw this aspect.

## Chapter Two

### Materialism in Chernyshevsky's Historical Views

In 1855 in a long critical article on the third and fourth issues of Leontiev's collection *Propylaea* very famous in its day, Chernyshevsky, challenging the opinion of Kutorga who considered farming the initial way of life of mankind, wrote:

\* See «Наемный труд и капитал», изд. «Пролетарнат», стр. 20. [Plekhanov is quoting from the Russian translation of Marx's book.]<sup>108</sup>

"The legends of all peoples testify that before they took up farming and became settled, they were nomadic and engaged in hunting and cattle-breeding. To confine ourselves to Greek legends and those relating specifically to Attica, we would point to the myth of Ceres and Triptolemus whom she taught farming—it is obvious that, according to the recollections of the Greeks, people originally lived in the poor and crude state of the savage hunters and they did not become acquainted with the prosperity of a settled, farming life until later. Such legends, common to all peoples, are fully borne out for the whole of the European section of Indo-European tribes by the studies of Grimm, which are rightly regarded as indisputably correct in their main conclusions. The same is proved directly by positive facts recorded in historical monuments: we do not know of a single people who, having once attained the farming stage, then fell into a state of savagery which does not know farming; on the contrary, in many of the European peoples authentic history has recorded almost from the very beginning the whole course of the spread of the farming way of life."\* European travellers in Africa have frequently met Negro tribes who, after being driven from their old place of settlement to a new geographical environment little suited to farming, abandoned the farming way of life and became shepherds or hunters. So Chernyshevsky is wrong in assuming that once having attained the farming stage, a people cannot move down to the lower stage. But he is quite right when he says that it is impossible to consider farming as the first step in the history of the development of productive forces. And he is also right in maintaining that the economic development of a society is the cause which gives rise to the development of its legal institutions. "In the case of sheep-keeping peoples, who are constantly moving from place to place," he says, "private landed property is inadequate, inconvenient and therefore unnecessary. In their case only the community (the tribe, clan, horde, ulus, yurta) guards the borders of its land, which is in the common use of all its members. Individuals do not have separate property. It is quite different with farming which makes private landed property a necessity. Therefore the connection of the land with tribal and later with state law originates from the nomadic state."\*\* Here we have a brilliant example of the decisive influence of the material aspect of the life of peoples on other aspects of this life. But it might be remarked, perhaps, that here Chernyshevsky is speaking only of the connection between "economics" and "politics". This is true, of course. Once this connection has been explained, however, the main features of what is called

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\* *Works*, Vol. I, p. 389.

\*\* *Ibid.*, p. 389. Cf. p. 428 of the same volume.



the social structure can be understood. And once the social structure has been understood as being the result of the economic development of society, it is easy to understand also the influence of "economics" on people's thoughts and feelings: for it has been recognised ever since the beginning of the nineteenth century that their thoughts and feelings are causally dependent on their social environment, i.e., on social relations. We have already seen that Chernyshevsky was able to explain the development of philosophical thought by the course of the political struggle, i.e., again by the development of the social environment. We also know from his article "The Anthropological Principle in Philosophy" that any given society and any given organic part of that society considers useful and just that which is useful to the society or its part. Chernyshevsky had only to apply this view consistently to the history of the ideological development of mankind to see clearly how this development is conditioned by the clash of human interests in society, i.e., by the "economics" of the given society. And Chernyshevsky did in fact see this clearly, at least in some cases. This is what he writes, for example, in a long bibliographical article on W. Roscher's *The Principles of the National Economy*, published in the fourth issue of the *Sovremennik* for 1861:

"Whatever group of people you like to take, its way of thinking is shaped by notions (correct or incorrect, it makes no difference, as we have said) of its own interests. Let us begin with a classification of people by nationality. Most Frenchmen think that England is 'la perfide Albion' which destroyed Napoleon I out of hatred for French prosperity. Most Frenchmen believe that the Rhine is the natural and necessary frontier of France. They also believe that the annexation of Savoy and Nice is a splendid thing. Most Englishmen believe that Napoleon I wanted to destroy England, which had done nothing wrong, and that the struggle against him was waged by England solely for her own salvation. Most Germans regard the French claim to the Rhine frontier as unjust. Most Italians consider the seizure of Savoy and Nice from Italy most unjust. Whence such a difference of views? Simply from the conflicting nature of the interests (imaginary or false, of course, but considered real by the nation in question) of nations. Or take the classification of people according to economic status. The corn producers in every country think it right that other countries should allow the import of corn from their country free of duty, and equally right that the import of corn into their country should be banned. The producers of manufactured goods in each country think it right that foreign corn should be allowed into their country free of duty. The source of this contradiction is the same: self-interest. It is in the interest of the producer of corn that it should cost more. It is in the interest of the producer

of manufactured goods that it should cost less. There would be little point in increasing the number of such examples—anyone can find thousands and tens of thousands of them himself.”\*

If each person always regards as good, indisputable and everlasting that which is of practical advantage to the group of people to which he belongs, the same “psychological law” should also be used, in Chernyshevsky’s opinion, to explain the changing of schools in political economy. The writers of the Adam Smith school considered the forms of economic life which determined the supremacy of the middle class very good and worthy of lasting forever. “The writers of this school represented the aspirations of the exchange or commercial estate in the broad sense of the word: bankers, wholesalers, factory-owners and all industrialists in general. The present forms of economic organisation are advantageous for the commercial estate, more advantageous for it than all other forms; that is why the school that was its representative found that these forms were the best in theory; it is only natural that because such a trend prevailed many writers appeared who expressed the general idea even more forcefully and called these forms ever-lasting, absolute.”\*\*

When people who were representatives of the masses began to reflect upon questions of political economy, another economic school, which is called—for some unknown reason, as Chernyshevsky remarks—the utopian school, appeared in the sciences. With the appearance of this school economists who represented the interests of the middle class saw themselves in the position of conservatives. When they had challenged the mediaeval institutions which conflicted with the interests of the middle class,\*\*\* they had appealed to reason. But now it was the representatives of the masses who were appealing to reason in their turn, rightly accusing the representatives of the middle class of inconsistency: “Reason was an excellent weapon for the Adam Smith school against mediaeval institutions,” says Chernyshevsky, “but this weapon could not be used for the struggle against the new opponents, because it passed into the latter’s hands and defeated the followers of the Smith school, to whom it had once been so useful.”\*\*\*\* Consequently the learned representatives of the middle class stopped referring to reason and began referring to history. Thus the historical school arose in political economy, one of the founders of which was Wilhelm Roscher.

Chernyshevsky maintains that this explanation of the history of economics is far more correct than the usual explanation with

\* *Works*, Vol. VIII, p. 137.

\*\* *Ibid.*, p. 138.

\*\*\* Chernyshevsky always uses the term *estate* when referring to social classes.

\*\*\*\* *Ibid.*, p. 139.

the help of references to the greater or lesser amount of knowledge of this or that school. He remarks scornfully that this latter explanation is similar to the method used to mark pupils at examinations: the pupil has a good knowledge of this subject, a bad knowledge of that. "As if in fact," Chernyshevsky asks, "a poor knowledge of history could prevent political economists from knowing that there existed other forms of economic life, different from the present ones, and as if this deprived such people of the possibility of feeling the need for new, more perfect forms, the possibility of admitting that the present forms were not absolute?"\* It is a matter not of information, but of the feelings of the thinker in question or the group of people which he represents. Fourier had no better a knowledge of history than Say, but he arrived at quite different conclusions. "No," concludes Chernyshevsky, "if a person likes the present he does not think of changes; if he dislikes the present, he does, regardless of whether he possesses historical knowledge or lacks it entirely."\*\*

This is as clear as can be. It is not consciousness that determines being, but being that determines consciousness. This proposition, which forms the basis of Feuerbach's philosophy, is applied by Chernyshevsky to the explanation of the history of economics, political theory and even philosophy. Chernyshevsky sees that social being contains mutually conflicting elements; he also sees how the struggle of these mutually conflicting social elements produces and determines the mutual struggle of theoretical ideas. But this is not all. He sees not only that the development of any science is determined by the development of the corresponding category of social phenomena. He understands that the mutual class struggle is bound to leave a profound mark on the whole internal history of society. Here is interesting evidence of this.

In his *Outlines of Political Economy*, after explaining the laws of the "tripartite distribution of commodities" which exists in modern advanced countries and drawing a brief final conclusion from his explanations, he expresses the following extremely interesting view on the inner springs of modern European history: "We have seen that the interests of rent are opposed to the interests of profit and workers' wages together. *The middle class and the common people have always been allies against the estate which receives rent.* We have seen that the interest of profit is opposed to the interest of workers' wages. As soon as the estate of capitalists and (the estate) of workers in joint alliance gain the upper hand over the class which receives rent, the history of the country acquires

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\* Ibid., p. 138.

\*\* Ibid., p. 138.

as its main content the struggle between the middle estate and the people."\*

Here our author's views coincide remarkably with the views of Marx and Engels. And this is not surprising. Chernyshevsky went through the same school as Marx and Engels: from Hegel he turned to Feuerbach. But Marx and Engels subjected Feuerbach's philosophy to a radical reshaping, whereas Chernyshevsky remained throughout his life a follower of this philosophy in the form which it took in Feuerbach himself. It is to Feuerbach that the famous expression—which gave rise to a great deal of talk and indignation in its time: *Der Mensch ist, was er isst* (a person is what he eats)—belongs. We have quoted above some other propositions of Feuerbach's concerning the influence that a person's way of living has on his way of thinking. All these are perfectly materialist propositions. But in Feuerbach these propositions remained entirely undeveloped even in his doctrine of religion. Chernyshevsky applied Feuerbach's views to aesthetics and in this, as we shall see below, he achieved results that in a certain sense are most remarkable. But here, too, his conclusions were not quite satisfactory because the perfectly correct idea of the aesthetic development of mankind implies the preliminary elaboration of a general conception of history. As regards this general conception of history, Chernyshevsky succeeded in making only a few, if very correct, steps towards its elaboration. One may cite as examples of such steps the long quotations from his writings that we have just made. These quotations show clearly that Chernyshevsky succeeded in making brilliant use of the materialist ideas of his teacher. But the materialist ideas of his teacher suffered from abstractness where they touched upon human social relations. And this weak side of Feuerbach's ideas resulted in the fact that the historical views of his Russian pupil were not sufficiently logical and consistent. The main shortcoming of these historical views is that at almost every point in them materialism gives way to idealism, and vice versa, but the final victory goes to idealism.

We are well aware how Chernyshevsky explains history in cases when he remains true to his materialist philosophy. Now let us see how he explains it when he adopts an idealist point of view.

### Chapter Three

#### Idealism in Chernyshevsky's Historical Views

Here is what we read in his article on V. P. Botkin's well-known book *Letters about Spain* (*Sovremennik*, 1857, Issue 2): "The division of a people into hostile castes is one of the great-

\* Our italics. *Works*, Vol. VII, 415.

est obstacles to the improvement of its future; in Spain there is no such disastrous division, no irreconcilable enmity between the estates, every one of which would be prepared to sacrifice the most precious historical achievements if only it would harm another estate; in Spain the entire nation feels itself a single whole. This feature is so unusual among the peoples of Western Europe that it deserves the greatest attention and may in itself be considered an earnest of the country's happy future."\*

This is not a slip of the pen, because, several pages further down in the same article, Chernyshevsky says: "The Spanish people have an indisputable advantage over most civilised nations in one, exceedingly important respect: the Spanish estates are not divided either by deep-rooted hatred or by substantially conflicting interests; they do not constitute castes inimical to one another, as is the case in many other West-European countries; on the contrary, in Spain all the estates can strive jointly for a common goal."\*\*

In the same article Chernyshevsky states categorically: "Ignorance is the root of all evil in Spain",\*\*\* and accordingly all his hopes for Spain's possible development in the future are pinned on the success of enlightenment in this country.

Any eighteenth-century "Enlightener" and any nineteenth-century utopian socialist would readily have subscribed to these views of his, just as any present-day Marxist would willingly subscribe to his ideas quoted above on the causal dependence of social thought on social life.

The utopian socialists, and in part the eighteenth-century enlighteners also, did not close their eyes to the *fact* of the class struggle in civilised society. Nor did Chernyshevsky. But while noting the *fact* of the class struggle the utopian socialists did not consider it possible to rely on it in order to carry out their programme. They believed, on the contrary, that the class struggle would be an obstacle to the implementation of their programme and that the latter could be carried out far more quickly and easily given the friendly cooperation of all social classes. Therefore they called upon all classes to unite in the name of future social reform.\*\*\*\* As we can see, in his remarks on the mutual

\* *Works*, Vol. III, p. 38.

\*\* *Ibid.*, p. 44.

\*\*\* *Ibid.*, p. 45.

\*\*\*\* Bourgin in his interesting book *Fourier. Contribution à l'étude du socialisme français*, Paris, 1905, says that Fourier's system contains the theory of the class struggle (p. 596). But Bourgin is confusing *recognition of the fact* of the class struggle with an *attitude to this fact*. The utopian socialists saw the fact of the class struggle, but did not see that "Der Widerspruch ist das Fortleitende" (contradiction leads forward), as Hegel said. They did not understand that the class struggle is the factor with the help of which all

relation of the classes in Spain, Chernyshevsky comes very close to the viewpoint of the utopian socialists.

In their *Manifesto* Marx and Engels give a most apt description of this viewpoint. "The Socialist and Communist systems properly so called, those of Saint-Simon, Fourier, Owen and others, spring into existence in the early undeveloped period, described above, of the struggle between proletariat and bourgeoisie. The founders of these systems see, indeed, the class antagonisms, as well as the action of the decomposing elements in the prevailing form of society. But the proletariat ... offers to them the spectacle of a class without any historical initiative or any independent political movement."<sup>107</sup>

It was because the utopian socialists did not see any historical initiative in the proletariat, that they addressed themselves to all classes of the society of their day irrespectively. And it was because they addressed themselves to all classes of society, that in the propagation of their practical plans they pointed not to what disunited these classes, but to what might unite them. But since modern society is based on the antagonism of classes, the main efforts of the utopian propagandists were, naturally, aimed at depicting the advantages of a *future* social order in which class antagonism would disappear, giving way to universal solidarity. In order to understand the advantages of this future social order, one need only reflect on the social laws discovered by a given social reformer. The utopian socialists believed, as the *Manifesto* already quoted by us says, that once people understood their system, they could not "fail to see in it the best possible plan of the best possible state of society".<sup>108</sup> But if, in the case of the utopian socialists, the whole future history of society amounted to the propagation and practical implementation of their reformist plans, they inevitably saw this history in an idealist light. C'est l'opinion qui gouverne le monde (it is opinion that rules the world), said the French Enlighteners of the eighteenth century. The utopian socialists readily repeated this proposition. Thus, for example, even Louis Blanc, whom the late Mikhailovsky was pleased to consider an "economic materialist", wrote in his *History of Ten Years*: "The true history of our age lies in the history of its ideas. Diplomatic ruses, court intrigues, noisy debates, street fighting—all this is nothing more than the agitation of societies (l'agitation des sociétés). Their life is not there. It is in the mysterious development of common aspirations, it lies in this quiet working out of doctrines preparing revolutions. For there is always a profound cause for all these events which, once they have happened, seem to us to have been

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progress in the internal relations of a class-divided society is made. Only Blanqui understood the historical importance of the class struggle; but in this respect Blanqui's socialism is a transition to scientific socialism.

engendered by chance.”\* In another passage he assures us that history is made by books (*L’histoire est faite par des livres*). In view of this it is not surprising that utopian socialists took an idealist view of the entire future of contemporary society. They were convinced that the fate of that society would be decided by the “views” held by its members, i.e., the standpoint which they took with regard to the social reorganisation plan put forward by a particular reformer. They did not ask themselves why it was that the dominant views in that particular society were such and not others. That is why they were not eager for a further elaboration of those elements of a materialist interpretation of history with which their doctrines undoubtedly were replete. In fact, they were prone to look on mankind’s past history as well from an idealist standpoint. For this reason, in their statements about that history we very often encounter the most undoubted and, it would seem, most obvious contradictions: facts which have apparently been interpreted in an entirely materialist sense are suddenly given an entirely idealist explanation; and, on the other hand, idealist interpretations are every now and again upset by perfectly materialist eruptions. This lack of stability, this recurrent shift from materialism to idealism and from idealism to materialism, a shift perceptible to the modern reader but imperceptible to the author, make themselves felt also in the historical statements of Chernyshevsky, who in this respect is very reminiscent of the great utopians of the West. In the final analysis he inclines like them, we repeat, to idealism.

This can be seen clearly from his interesting article “On the Causes of the Fall of Rome (an Imitation of Montesquieu)” published in the *Souremennik* in 1861 (Issue 5). In it he vigorously attacks the very widespread opinion that the Roman Empire in the West fell because of its inherent inability to develop further, whereas the barbarians who put an end to its existence brought with them new seeds of progress. “Just think, what progress is and what a barbarian is!” Chernyshevsky exclaims. “Progress is based on intellectual development; its fundamental aspect lies precisely in the successes and spread of knowledge.... Mathematics develops, and this leads to the development of applied mechanics; the development of applied mechanics leads to the improvement of all manner of fabrications, crafts, etc.... Historical knowledge advances; this reduces the number of false notions that prevent people from organising their social life, which, therefore, becomes better organised than before. Finally, all intellectual labour develops man’s intellectual powers, and the more people in a country who learn to read, who acquire the habit and love of

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\* *Histoire de dix ans*, t. III, Paris, 1844, p. 89.

reading books, the larger the number of people in it who are capable of running things properly, whatever they may be—which means that the course of all aspects of life in the country is improved. Consequently the main force behind progress is learning; the achievements of progress are proportionate to the amount and spread of knowledge. So this is what progress is: the result of knowledge. But what is a barbarian? A man who is still wallowing in the deepest ignorance; a man who is half-way between a wild beast and a human being with the rudiments of a developed mind.... What good is it to society, if institutions, good or bad, but nevertheless human ones, possessing something that is in the slightest degree rational, are replaced by the customs of animals?"\*

No mention is made here either of the internal social relations in Rome, which accounted for its weakness and which were pointed out even by Guizot in the first article of his *Essais sur l'histoire de France*, or of the forms of communal life to which the German barbarians owed their strength at the time of the fall of the Roman Empire in the West. Chernyshevsky even forgot the famous words of Pliny, which he himself quotes elsewhere: *latifundia perdidere Italiam* (latifundia were the undoing of Italy). In his "formula of progress", as the phrase went in our country afterwards, there is no room for the internal relations in the country concerned. Everything is reduced to intellectual development. Chernyshevsky states emphatically that progress is based on intellectual development and that "its fundamental aspect lies precisely in the successes and development of knowledge". It does not even occur to him that "the successes and development of knowledge" may depend on social relations, which in some cases are conducive to those successes and that development and in others hinder them. He depicts social relations as a mere corollary of the spread of certain views. We have just read this: "Historical knowledge advances; this reduces the number of false notions that prevent people from organising their social life, which, therefore, becomes better organised than before." This is very unlike what our author said in his article on Roscher's book. From what he said there it followed, moreover, that it is impossible, and indeed ridiculous, to judge scholars as if they were school-boys, saying that a particular scholar was unfamiliar with a particular science and therefore came to hold erroneous views. It also followed from what he said there that what matters is not the amount of knowledge acquired by a particular scholar, but the interests of the group which he represents. In short, it followed from what he said there that social views are determined by social interests; and social thought, by social life. Now, it is the

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\* *Works*, Vol. VIII, p. 158.



other way round. Now it appears that social life is determined by social thought and that if a social system has certain shortcomings, it is because society, like a schoolboy, has studied poorly or little, and therefore has conceived erroneous notions. It would be hard to think of a more striking contradiction.

And it is interesting that the article "On the Fall of Rome" appeared in the fifth, and the article on Roscher's book in the fourth issue of the *Sovremennik* for 1861. So here it cannot be said that Chernyshevsky held different views at different times on the question of interest to us here. No. He held different views at one and the same time, and this is characteristic of him as a man who had not yet succeeded in reducing his historical views to a single principle and therefore, so to say, simultaneously adhered to materialism and idealism in his discussions on the course of history.

"It is said that a society found the established forms constricting," Chernyshevsky argues, later on, "which means that in the society there was a progressive force, there was the need for progress."\* To this it may be objected—and, of course, people who did not share Chernyshevsky's idealist view in this case did object—that the need for progress is one thing, and the presence in society of a force capable of satisfying this need is quite another. One must not confuse these two concepts, which are quite different in content: one of them is purely negative (the "need for progress" indicates merely the constricting nature of the existing forms), the other positive, for the presence in society of a progressive force capable of making the necessary change in the forms of communal life assumes a certain level of intellectual, moral and political development of the class or classes which are affected by the unfavourable aspects of these forms. If these concepts were identical, human progress would be an extremely simple matter, and we would not encounter in history the sorry spectacle of societies which have collapsed under the heavy weight of forms of communal life which, for all their indisputable harmfulness, could not be abolished because there were no vital forces in the people capable of doing so. It goes without saying that we are not speaking here of forms harmful to all the classes of the society in question. Such forms abolish themselves, one might say. But more often than not it is other forms, unfavourable for the majority and very favourable for a privileged minority, which are particularly harmful for the further successes of the society. Such forms can be abolished only if the suffering majority possesses albeit the slightest ability to take independent political action. And it does not always possess this ability. This ability is by no means an inherent quality of the oppressed majority. It

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\* Ibid., p. 160.

is itself created by the *economics* of the given society. It would seem that there was nothing more advantageous for the proletarians of Rome than to support the Gracchi draft laws. But they did not support them, nor could they have done so, because the social situation in which the economic development of Rome placed them not only did not promote their political development, but, quite the reverse, constantly lowered its level. As for the upper classes, firstly, it would be absurd to expect from them political action contrary to their economic interests, and, secondly, they were themselves being more and more corrupted by the influence of another aspect of the same course of economic development which was creating the Roman proletariat and at the same time turning it into a bloodthirsty and obtuse mob. Finally, things had come to such a pass that the Romans, those conquerors of the world, were unfit for military service, and the legions were reinforced with the very barbarians who eventually put an end to the existence of the Empire which was half-dead already.\* Thus, contrary to Chernyshevsky's explanations, there is nothing accidental about the fall of Rome, for it was the natural end of an historico-social movement which had begun long before.

But Chernyshevsky takes an entirely different view of the question of the forces with the help of which the social need for progress could be met. In his opinion, such forces are always available wherever they are needed.

Their availability is ensured for any given society, *firstly, by the laws of physiology*. "The organism of the individual person lives out its life; but with each new-born person a new organism appears with new, fresh powers, and with each change of generation the powers of a nation are renewed.... Do not contradict physiology, please, do not say that there are nations which consist of people who are headless or without stomachs, or exclusively of old men, or exclusively of young people—for each

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\* Eduard Meyer is quite right in saying: "Erst als das Reich innerlich bereits völlig zersetzt war, haben die Barbaren, die es selbst hereingerufen, denen es das Schwert in die Hand gegeben hatte, ihm die westlichen Provinzen entrissen" (*Die wirtschaftliche Entwicklung des Altertums*, Jena, 1895, S. 50). ["Only when the Empire was completely disintegrated internally, did the barbarians, whom it had called in itself and in whose hand it had put the sword, take the Western provinces away from it."] Cf. also pp. 52-63. On the same question see the short but interesting work by A. Secrétan: *La Dépopulation de l'empire romain et les invasions germaniques*, Lausanne, 1908. Cf. also Rodbertus, "Zur Geschichte der agrarischen Entwicklung Roms" (*Hildebrandts Jahrbücher für Nationalökonomie*, II; in Russian literature the question of the fall of the Roman Empire is examined by Prof. Д. Перушевский—*Очерки из истории средневекового общества и государства*, издание второе, Москва, 1908, стр. 1-189 [D. Petrushevsky, *Essays on the History of the Mediaeval Society and State*, second edition, Moscow, 1908, pp. 1-189].

of these four phrases is equally absurd. What a desire to show oneself as a fool or a liar."\*

Secondly, Chernyshevsky argues his point also with the help of the following *logical consideration*. He asks by what power the forms of communal life which stand on the path of progress were created. To this question he replies confidently: by the power of society. And from this he concludes that since the amount of power in society does not decrease, society cannot become powerless over that over which it formerly had power: "Is it more difficult to destroy than to create? Think what you are saying: the masons who have built a house do not have the power to knock it down; the carpenter who has made a table or the blacksmith who has forged an anchor does not have the power to destroy it."\*\*

But not all the forces which exist in a given society act in the same direction. History shows that the "masons", "carpenters", etc., who attempt to alter "houses", "tables", and so on, have to overcome the resistance of those social groups who are interested in the "houses" and "tables" retaining their former appearance. In other cases, i.e., when he was true to the materialist point of view, Chernyshevsky himself was fully aware of this fact and brought it out well. But the "imitation of Montesquieu" carried him away to the eighteenth-century point of view, and he began to reason like the most thorough-bred idealist.

Chernyshevsky's final conclusion is that the Ancient World was destroyed solely by the wave of unrest which seized all the nomads from the Rhine to the Amur. "It was no more nor less than the destruction of a country by a flood. There was no internal need for death. On the contrary, life was fresh, progress unceasing. The destruction of the Roman Empire was a geological catastrophe like the destruction of Herculaneum and Pompeii, like the destruction of the country over which the waters of the Zuider Zee now flow."\*\*\*

It is usually considered that Chernyshevsky's article "On the Causes of the Fall of Rome" was aimed against Herzen who after the failure of the revolution of 1848-49 became disillusioned with Western Europe and looked primarily to Russia and its peasant commune for the implementation of socialism. In his recently published book on Herzen Mr. Ch. Vetrinsky says confidently that in Chernyshevsky's article one cannot fail to see Herzen in the imaginary opponent whom the author does not know whether to call a fool or a liar.\*\*\*\* Mr. Vetrinsky is not quite

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\* *Works*, Vol. VIII, p. 159.

\*\* *Ibid.*, p. 160.

\*\*\* *Ibid.*, pp. 167-68.

\*\*\*\* Ч. Ветринский, «Герцен», Спб., 1908, стр. 355. [Ch. Vetrinsky, *Herzen*, St. Petersburg, 1908, p. 355.]

accurate in his description of Chernyshevsky's polemical device. The latter does not say that his imaginary opponent is either a fool or a liar. He merely advises him not to accept certain propositions which only a fool or a liar would accept.... This is also extremely caustic, of course; but this extreme causticity does not have the nature of a personal insult, which it acquires in Mr. Ch. Vetrinsky's account. In itself the assumption that Chernyshevsky is disputing Herzen in his article seems more than likely to us also.\* True, in view of the fact that in his article Chernyshevsky criticises boasting about Russia's uniqueness and exultation in it, one might think that he was attacking the Slavophiles. But in this connection he makes a reservation which compels us to reject this idea. The reservation is as follows: "We are not speaking here of the Slavophiles, of course: the Slavophiles have eyes constructed in such a way that whatever rubbish they see in our country, our rubbish is excellent and eminently suitable for resuscitating dying Europe.... We are not speaking of these people: they are few in number and there is no point in arguing with them, we are speaking not of eccentrics, but of people who reason in accordance with ordinary human sense."\*\* Hence it is clear that Chernyshevsky did not have such a poor opinion of his imaginary opponent as Mr. Vetrinsky ascribed to him. But this is by the way. The important point here is that, to quote Chernyshevsky, his "imaginary opponent" does not see anything in Russia, apart from communal land tenure, which could usefully spread from us to the advanced countries and with which we could promote their resuscitation. This enables one to say with almost the utmost confidence that Chernyshevsky's article was aimed against Herzen's well-known view about Russia's attitude to the "old world". Chernyshevsky firmly rejects this view: Europe has nothing to learn from us, "because it understands far better than we do, what new systems it needs, how to build them and by what means to introduce them. So we have absolutely nothing with which to resuscitate it".\*\*\*

This was quite true, just as it was true that we have no grounds to boast about our uniqueness, which amounts to terrible backwardness. Chernyshevsky's fight against such boasting, regardless

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\* Herzen took the article "On the Fall of Rome" as referring to him, as did Ogarev who wrote about it in one of his letters: "it is shameful thus to sell Christ, i.e., truth and the cause, it is inadmissible. It is what Christians called a crime against the spirit" (see M. K. Lemke's article "The Case of N. G. Chernyshevsky", *Byloye*, 1906, No. 3). One cannot agree with this on any account, of course. To object to the semi-Slavophilism of Herzen and Ogarev was by no means to "sin against the spirit".

\*\* *Works*, Vol. VIII, p. 173.

\*\*\* *Ibidem*.

of whom it proceeded from, will always be to his credit. Herzen formed his view of Russia's attitude to the "old world" under the strong influence of Slavophiles and this view was wrong. But one can arrive at an erroneous view even when one employs a more or less correct method, just as a correct view may result from the employment of a more or less erroneous method. It is therefore fair to ask oneself how the method by which Herzen formed his erroneous view was related to the method which led Chernyshevsky to a completely justified repudiation and ridicule of that view.

We already have half the answer to this question: we have seen that in his argumentation of the causes of the fall of Rome Chernyshevsky adhered to a *purely idealist method*. And since we consider this method erroneous in essence, we would say that although Chernyshevsky was right in his sharply negative attitude to Herzen's semi-Slavophil view of the fate awaiting Western Europe, this correct result was nevertheless obtained by him with the help of an erroneous method. But in that case what can be said of Herzen?

His train of thought was as follows: the Western peoples live in certain economic conditions; the Russian people in entirely different ones. In the West petty-bourgeois ownership prevails; the Russian people inclines towards communal ownership. Therefore the Western peoples are imbued with a petty-bourgeois spirit that is irreconcilably hostile to socialism, whereas the Russian people is probably the most anti-petty-bourgeois people in the world and as a result of this is perhaps more than all other peoples capable of realising the socialist ideal.

In this argument of Herzen's there were very many mistakes of fact and very many errors of logic. This is why they led him to erroneous results. But no matter how erroneous the results to which they led Herzen, one is bound to acknowledge that they were based in part on the true, although not sufficiently thought-out idea that *consciousness is determined by being*. And in so far as Herzen adhered to this perfectly correct idea—we repeat, it was far from achieving complete clarity in him and far from being fully thought out—he was closer than Chernyshevsky to the materialist explanation of history which alone can reveal to us the true springs of social development.\*

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\* Herzen wrote that the fate of the West depended on whether the people was successful or not in its struggle with the upper classes. "If the people is defeated, New China [England.—G.P.] and New Persia [France.—G.P.] will be inevitable. But if the people prevails, *social revolution* will be inevitable" (*Kolokol*, Nos. 40 and 41, April 15, 1859, article "J. S. Mill and his book *On Liberty*"). Such propositions cannot be refuted by references to "*physiology*". Here it is essential to appeal to *social economy*, which Chernyshevsky does not do in this case.

### Chapter Four

#### The Course of Social Development

We have just seen that the article "On the Causes of the Fall of Rome" was aimed against semi-Slavophil boasting about Russia's uniqueness. It should now be added that it was also aimed against something else. In it Chernyshevsky was also attacking what he considered the unfounded and harmful optimism in the theories of West-European historians of the Guizot school. It is worth reminding the reader that the formal reason for the appearance of the article in question was the publication in Mr. M. Stasyulevich's Russian translation of the first part of Guizot's *Histoire de la civilisation en France depuis la chute de l'Empire Romain, etc.* In challenging Herzen's view, Chernyshevsky also comes forward as a resolute opponent of historical optimism. Having expressed the firm conviction that the destruction of the Roman Empire was a "geological catastrophe" like the one which destroyed Herculaneum and Pompeii, he says:

"Similar cases of the destruction of objects and causes by external destructive forces, no matter how sound the cause or how full of life the object, are encountered every day in private life and countless times in history, only in known history this destruction has never taken place on such a vast scale as in the destruction of the whole of the ancient civilised world. But do not talk about the rationality or beneficiality of these catastrophes. A horse kicks a man on the temple and the man dies. What rationality is there here, what inner causes of death? Lisbon was destroyed by an earthquake. Were the merits or defects of Portuguese civilisation responsible for this? A simoom rises, and a caravan in the Sahara desert is buried in the sand—do not argue that the camels and horses were bad, the people stupid, and the merchandise poor."\*

In Guizot's historical optimism Chernyshevsky objected to the tendency to find that the conquerors are always right and the conquered are the guilty ones. Chernyshevsky calls this tendency trite and says that in practice it is not always like this: sometimes those who are right conquer and sometimes those who are guilty. He applies Schiller's lines in "The Feast of Victory" to history:

*Gifts go where there is no merit,  
Luck where it has not been earned.  
See Patroclus dead and buried,  
While Thersites has returned.*

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\* *Works*, Vol. VIII, p. 168.

The German barbarians who destroyed the Roman Empire in the West are regarded by Chernyshevsky as something in the nature of Thersites, at least until they abandoned their barbaric customs. He describes the social order established after the collapse of the Roman state as follows: "On the conquest of the Roman provinces each member of the tribe of conquerors plunders, robs and kills anyone he pleases, from the conquered population or from his own comrades, until someone kills him, and the leader chops off the heads of all who fall into his hands."\* From this plundering, which continued for several centuries, feudalism eventually emerged. But the feudal system was not progress either, compared with the social life which had existed in the Roman Empire. There was a certain degree of lawfulness in Rome, but feudalism was robbery elevated into a system, internecine strife subordinated to certain rules. Even feudalism, of course, was a step forward by comparison with the sixth and seventh centuries. But, according to Chernyshevsky, it was a step forward only in the sense that the old Italian robbers who would accept a ransom were better than the earlier robbers who killed without a ransom. When feudalism gave way to a centralised bureaucracy, which did not happen until the seventeenth century, what was established in the new Europe was the same form that had prevailed in Rome in the third century.

"So now talk about the beneficial influence of the conquest of the Roman provinces by the barbarians," Chernyshevsky concludes. "The beneficial nature of this event was simply that the advanced sections of the human race were cast into a deep abyss of savagery out of which they barely succeeded in rising to their former position after fourteen centuries of incredible efforts."\*\* These lines show that in the historical views of our author an extremely important role is ascribed to *chance*. One might say that the whole trend of West-European history throughout the fourteen centuries which followed the fall of the Roman Empire was determined, in his opinion, by a single colossal chance or, as he puts it in another passage, by a geological catastrophe: the invasion of the barbarians. The expression "geological catastrophe" calls to mind Cuvier who explained the fate of the world's flora and fauna by geological catastrophes. We already know that Chernyshevsky rejected Cuvier's theory and adhered to the viewpoint of transformism. So the question arises as to how transformism could exist in his historical views alongside his teaching on the chances and catastrophes which determined the historical fate of peoples for whole centuries.

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\* Ibid., p. 169.

\*\* Ibid., p. 171.

In raising this question we do not wish to suggest that transformism is incompatible with the concept of catastrophes. If by catastrophes one means *interruptions in gradual development*—the so-called leaps in nature or history—it would be unpardonable to forget that Hegel in his *Logic* proved the total inevitability of “catastrophes” in any logical theory of development. We have expressed our views on this subject on many occasions in other works and do not consider it necessary to return to it here. But if “catastrophes” are logically inevitable in any theory of development that is in any degree logical, this indisputable fact does not determine the extent to which any given theory that assigns a place to “catastrophes” may be regarded as logical. In asking how Chernyshevsky’s transformism could exist alongside his teaching on “catastrophes”, we wish to elucidate whether he was able to see “catastrophes” as one of the elements of development. This is one of the most important questions which arise in the examination of any given social or historical theory.

The answer to this question must be sought in Chernyshevsky’s bibliographical note on another of Guizot’s works, also dealing with the history of civilisation, but in the whole of Europe, not only in France. The Russian translation of this work appeared in 1861, and in the 9th issue of the *Sovremennik* for that year Chernyshevsky wrote his review of it.

In this note Guizot is described as a serious scholar who has made a profound study of the subjects which he discusses. If he has many incorrect ideas, Chernyshevsky nevertheless regarded each of these ideas as worthy of careful examination. The chief feature and chief merit of Guizot’s historical works is the fact that their author excludes an account of individual events from his plan and concentrates all his attention on a description of the general spirit of the events, institutions and ideas of each given age. The chief shortcoming of these works, however, in Chernyshevsky’s eyes, is, as we already know, an excessive optimism in the evaluation of historical events.\* Guizot’s excessive optimism was based on a one-sided idea of progress. Whatever Western Europe was in the thirteenth century, its position then was better than in the tenth century. The same may be said of the seventeenth century: the position of Europe then was better than 400 years earlier. Finally, the present time, whatever it may be, is still better than the seventeenth century. The fate of European mankind is slowly but surely improving. This is incontestable. But from this incontestable fact optimists like Guizot draw wrong conclusions.

The reason for the slow but sure improvement in the life of European mankind lies, according to Chernyshevsky, “in the na-

\* *Works*, Vol. VI, p. 347.



ture of the European nations themselves, which, like all other nations, are not lacking in strivings for enlightenment, truth and all other good things".\* One of the good features of human nature is the inborn capacity and desire to work. It is all these good qualities of human nature which explain the gradual improvement of the destiny of mankind. "The masses work, and the arts of production are gradually perfected. They are endowed with a love of knowledge or, at least, curiosity, and enlightenment gradually develops; thanks to the development of agriculture, industry and abstract knowledge manners become more refined and customs, then later institutions as well, are improved; all this has a single cause—the inner striving of the masses to improve their material and moral life."\*\*

But this inner striving of the masses to improve their life takes place in conditions—Chernyshevsky says: under the influence of forms—which do not always favour it. These conditions, according to our author, "proceed from quite different sources and are supported by quite different means". As an example Chernyshevsky takes feudalism: "What did it have in common with industry and love of knowledge? It proceeded from conquest, its aim was the appropriation of the work of others, it was supported by force, and the feudal lords had no scholastic aspirations; they wanted to idle away all the time that was not taken up with wars, tournaments and similar occupations."\*\*\* Therefore one cannot say that feudalism was of benefit to work in any respect. If work achieved any results it was in spite of feudalism, not because of it. The same must be said of achievements in knowledge. If there were such achievements, they took place not because of feudalism, but in spite of it. This explains the slowness of progress; this explains the fact that civilisation remains unsatisfactory to this very day. Chernyshevsky says: "Civilisation found support in nothing but man's nature, and the people whose work and love of knowledge produced it were in an extremely difficult position, so that their activity was very weak and constantly exposed to obstacles which destroyed most of the little it had been able to produce. No sooner did it have some success in the towns of Upper Italy, than a horde of Germans descended upon it and the result of the struggle of the emperors with the popes was the subjection of the towns of Lombardy and Tuscany to the rule of the condottieri; no sooner did industry and science begin to flower in Southern France, than Innocent III directed the hordes of Northern France to these flourishing areas, preaching the destruc-

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\* Ibid., p. 348.

\*\* Ibidem.

\*\*\* Ibidem.

tion of the Albigenses. One way or another was constantly repeated all over Western

Although progress was made *thanks to* human forms under which it had to realise its aspirations, inclined to optimism attributed progress to repeating the logical error expressed in the *ergo propter hoc*.\*\* They said: "Progress has this form, therefore it was produced by this form." remarks that, according to such logic, one winter as the cause of the heat which dwellings in spite of the influence of the cold finds that Guizot more than all other historians sin against logic: in him every important fact is presented as promoting progress.\*\*\*

Without touching upon the reasons which explain Guizot's optimism, we shall try to make our arguments.

First of all, we would point out that at the very beginning in this respect lies an idea contrary to the one in the article "The Anthropological Principle" in which he said that man is by nature neither good nor bad, good or bad depending on the circumstances. That human nature aspires "to enlightenment, to all that is good" and that it is constantly in rebellion in spite of circumstances which are unfavourable, are these circumstances? The actions of people rob them and interrupt their useful toil with idleness. But if actions of this kind are explained by human nature, the description of human nature by Chernyshevsky is incomplete: it should then be said that in nature there lies an aspiration not only to all that is good but also to all that is bad. And having thus added to the description of human nature, we are inevitably faced with the question: why do we have the good aspirations inherent in this nature in some cases, and the bad ones in others? If we say in the article "The Anthropological Principle" that everything here depended on the circumstances, we are right. But then we are immediately faced with the question: to what sort of circumstances permitted the development of the bad elements in human nature that led, for example, to the emergence of feudalism. Chernyshevsky's argument does not answer this question; but they do contain reasons and grounds for thinking that he would hardly have attributed to human nature such bad actions as

\* Ibidem.

\*\* [after it, therefore because of it]

\*\*\* Ibid., p. 349.

exploitation of the work of others, etc. He maintains, as we have seen, that the forms of life under the unfavourable influence of which "progress is produced", "proceed from quite different sources". Where these sources come from remains unknown. But no matter where our author deduced them from, it is clear that he could have refused to deduce them from human nature only by abandoning the point of view which he defended in the article "The Anthropological Principle in Philosophy".

Let us go on. The forms under which progress takes place do not always favour it. Very well. What are these forms? Chernyshevsky points to feudalism. But feudalism is a complete and fairly complex set of social relations. Which aspect of these relations does Chernyshevsky have in mind? He dwells primarily on wars, robbery, conquest, etc. Let us too examine this aspect of feudal relations.

War determines the social order to a certain extent, of course, but before determining it, war itself is determined by this order. For this reason—and for this reason only—it has a different character at different stages of social development: savages fight among themselves differently from barbarian tribes, and barbarian tribes differently from civilised nations. The results of conquest are also different at the various stages of social development. When the Normans conquered England this produced certain results, and when the Germans conquered Alsace-Lorraine this produced quite different ones. The social consequences of conquest have always depended upon the social relations prevailing among the conquerors, on the one hand, and the conquered, on the other. As for feudalism itself, seen from the aspect of interest to us here, it must be remembered that the appearance of a special estate with the obligation to render military service presupposed a long process of social development which consisted of a change in property, mainly land, relations and a consequent change in the division of social labour.\* And this process took place on a certain economic basis which, for some strange reason, is entirely overlooked by our author. He says that, following their good aspiration, mediaeval people worked and that their work was hindered by such "forms" as feudalism. But let us suppose that there had been no feudalism or any other "forms" like it which were unfavourable to work. What would the social grouping have been like then? What "forms" would have developed under the influence of the unimpeded aspiration to work? Chernyshevsky would probably have replied that in that case this or that type of communal life would have flourished. But what would have been the limits of the communes developing under

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\* Cf. the above-mentioned work by D. Petrushevsky, *Essays on the History of the Mediaeval Society and State*, pp. 234-56 and 290-309.

such favourable circumstances? And are there not grounds for assuming that friction would have arisen between the communes? And if such grounds exist, are we not right in thinking that this friction would have led to wars, to the oppression of the weak by the strong, and to all the phenomena by the presence of which Chernyshevsky explained the slow development of civilisation?

In attributing to force an exaggerated role in the mediaeval history of West-European societies, Chernyshevsky was following the example of his teachers—the socialists of the utopian period, who in turn followed the example of the French historians of the time of the Restoration.

These historians set great store upon the role of the class struggle in the development of European society. Guizot said that the whole history of France had been made by the struggle of classes.\* French historians of the period in question regarded the Great French Revolution also as a result of the struggle of the "third estate" against the secular and ecclesiastical aristocracy. Since they were the ideologists of the bourgeoisie, it was natural that all their sympathies should be on the side of the "third estate". However inclined Guizot, for example, was to optimism, his optimism amounted essentially to the belief that the whole history of Europe from the time of the fall of the Roman Empire in the West had prepared in some way or other the triumph of the "third estate", or—as Guizot put it more accurately—the middle classes. And in so far as these scholars regarded this history as a logical process, they saw in it a process preparing the triumph of the bourgeoisie. It should suffice to recall Augustin Thierry with his *History of the Third Estate*,\*\* excellent for its day. Having adopted the viewpoint of the middle classes, Augustin Thierry and other famous French historians of his day felt no sympathy for feudalism. And although they were quite prepared to admit the logic of its historical emergence, they studied it poorly and explained it primarily by conquest. Some of them, Guizot, for example, reconciled themselves very easily to the fact of conquest and readily expatiated on its beneficial consequences which, as already mentioned, were primarily that they had prepared the more or less remote triumph of the middle class. Others, for example, Augustin Thierry, showed a great, almost passionate antipathy for the fact of conquest. But, whatever the case, all of them explained the emergence of feudalism by conquest, unlike the bourgeois order the development of which they explained primarily by economic causes. From the point of view of modern economics, which has discovered the economic causes of the emergence of feudalism, this characteristic feature of the views of

\* It is interesting that Chernyshevsky pays no attention to this aspect of Guizot's views.

\*\* [*Essais sur l'histoire du tiers état.*]

French historians of the Restoration period should, of course, be regarded as the weak side of these views. But the utopian socialists took a different view of the matter. They, on the contrary, regarded the weak side of the French historians' views as their strong side which provided them with new arguments against the existing social order: ownership, which was the result of conquest, lost the sacred appearance which the conservatives tried to give it. The utopian socialists were, therefore, by no means inclined to remedy the said shortcoming in the views of the historians. Nor, as we have just seen, was Chernyshevsky. Like all the utopian socialists, he attached an exaggerated importance to conquest. He did not see to what extent his view on "forms" like feudalism which were allegedly contrary to human nature was incompatible with what was said on the importance of history in Granovsky's speech, of which he thought so highly. The reader will remember that in this speech the historical fate of nations and even their social life are described as being causally dependent on features of geographical environment. And we have already noted that Chernyshevsky himself accepted the influence of this environment in the sense of assisting or impeding the *economic* development of society, as the main basis of its structure.

### Chapter Five

#### Chernyshevsky and Marx

We have mentioned on more than one occasion that Chernyshevsky, like Marx, went through the school of Feuerbach. We have also said that whereas Chernyshevsky continued to adhere to Feuerbach's views, applying them to certain individual branches of knowledge, aesthetics, for example, Marx in collaboration with Engels subjected these views to a radical reshaping, particularly that aspect of them which had a bearing on history. It is interesting to compare the results at which Marx and Engels arrived in their explanation of history with the deductions which our author reached in the same field. Material for a most striking comparison is provided by Marx's long and extremely interesting review of Guizot's work *Pourquoi la révolution d'Angleterre a-t-elle réussi? Discours sur l'histoire de la révolution d'Angleterre*, Paris, 1850, which appeared first in Marx's journal *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*<sup>109</sup> and was reprinted by Mehring in the third volume of *The Literary Legacy of Marx, Engels and Lassalle*.

The main criticism which Marx makes of Guizot in this review is that the French scholar applies common phrases used in French parliamentary debates to the explanation of English history, ignoring the country's economic development and the course of the class struggle, determined by the latter, within English socie-

ty. Speaking of the influence of religious doctrines on the course of the English revolution, Guizot forgets that these doctrines were in close causal connection with the development of civic society. The expulsion of the Stuarts from England is also portrayed without being linked with even its closest economic causes, for example, the fears of the landed aristocracy for the lands which it had acquired as a result of the secularisation of church estates and which, of course, would have been taken away from it if Catholicism, which enjoyed the support of the Stuarts, had triumphed, etc.\* There is not a word in this review of Marx's about human nature, about the relation which certain forms of social life have to it: by the time to which the review belongs Marx evidently already adhered firmly to the principle which he expressed later in *Capital* and which was that acting on the external world in the production process, man at the same time changes his own nature.<sup>111</sup> In short, by 1850, when Marx wrote this review, he is already speaking as a materialist about Guizot, whereas Chernyshevsky in his notes written ten years later challenges the French historian's arguments with nothing but purely idealist views.

We would note in passing that Marx was not entirely correct in his attitude to Guizot. The latter is by no means as ignorant of the devices of the materialist explanation of historical events as one might think on the basis of Marx's review. Engels subsequently expressed a far more correct view of the French historians of the Restoration period. But even Marx's excessively strict attitude to Guizot in the said review is characteristic of him: it was simply the result of irritation at the sight of elements of idealism which undoubtedly occupied a considerable place in the historical views of the French historian. Chernyshevsky was also irritated with Guizot, but he was irritated not by the fact that Guizot remained an idealist in the final analysis but by the fact that this scholar's reasoning was not always sufficiently imbued with the type of idealism to which socialists of the utopian period adhered and by virtue of which they did not *explain* history, but merely criticised or approved of this or that historical phenomenon.

Describing the dialectical method, Chernyshevsky said that in fact everything depends on the circumstances of place and time and that therefore the general, abstract propositions with the help of which people judged good and evil earlier (before Hegel) are unsatisfactory. Criticising Guizot's views, he himself begins to judge historical events from the viewpoint of these abstract propositions. But this is precisely the point: he rarely looked at history from the dialectical point of view.

\* *Aus dem literarischen Nachlass von Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels und Ferdinand Lassalle, Dritter Band, Stuttgart, 1902, S. 412-13.*<sup>110</sup>

Marx and Engels never denied the historical importance of the development of ideas in general, and of scientific concepts in particular. They firmly bore in mind, however, that it is not being which is determined by consciousness, but consciousness which is determined by being and that consequently it is not the history of ideologies which explains the history of society, but, quite the reverse, the history of society which explains the history of ideologies. Chernyshevsky also saw this quite clearly in certain cases. We are already familiar with some brilliant examples of this. But when he combined his individual historical views into a single whole, he seemed to forget entirely about his materialist views and made the development of being causally dependent on the development of consciousness. His most interesting passages in this respect are to be found in his review of Novitsky's book *The Gradual Development of Ancient Philosophical Doctrines in Connection with the Development of Pagan Religions* (*Sovremennik*, 1860, No. 6, reprinted in the *Collected Works*).

In this review Chernyshevsky compares the history of mankind with military campaigns. In military campaigns there are usually stragglers whose numbers increase as the army and the General Staff push further and further forward. When the advance is rapid it sometimes happens that the bulk of the soldiers are left far behind. These stragglers take no part in the battles and are only a hindrance to their comrades at the front who bear the entire brunt of the struggle. But when their struggle ends in victory, when the enemy is subdued, and the victors are able to rest, the stragglers gradually catch up the advanced lines, and in the end the whole army is again united under its banners, as it was at the beginning of the campaign. The same thing is observed in mankind's intellectual advance also. At first all nations march in step: the Ancient Greeks at one time held the same conceptions as are characteristic of the Hottentots today. Then certain nations began to draw ahead, and others to lag behind. The Greeks described by Homer were already far in advance of the Troglodytes or Laestrygones. Later, there appeared the stragglers and the advanced among the Greeks as well. Thus, for example, by the time of Solon the Spartans were way behind the Athenians. Then a division appeared among the Athenians themselves. "The wisdom of Solon was intelligible to every Athenian," says Chernyshevsky, "whereas Socrates was regarded as a free-thinker by the majority of his fellow countrymen."\* We find the same in later history. At first the entire mass of people who inhabited the provinces of the former Roman Empire in the West held the same view of things. "In the seventh or eighth century, the Popes differed from the least educated French or Irish peasants

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\* *Works*, Vol. VI, 265.

only in that they could remember more scriptural texts and prayers, but not in that they interpreted them differently." After a while the matter changed: "the difference in the material conditions of the estates created a difference in their intellectual life".\* The wealth of the church enabled theologians to become educated, the more gifted of whom set about revising the old conceptions. At the same time learning also advanced, developing a content which was intelligible only to the specialist and therefore not understood by the masses. These successes of learning "were based on the material resources at the command of the clergy and the middle estate; the burghers also participated in the production of the new poetry, which the common people, clinging to their old folklore and folk songs, did not understand: in the city guilds companies of meistersingers, masters of poetry, were formed; but this change was facilitated even more by the wealth of the feudal barons who had their court poets, the troubadours".\*\* But in the Middle Ages the gap between the advanced people and the masses was less than it became in modern times, when learning began to develop with amazing rapidity, while the vast majority of the population remained in a state of ignorance very similar to that in, say, the ninth or tenth century. Poetry developed among the educated estates with equal rapidity, whereas the masses still had nothing more than garbled scraps of the popular poetry of the Middle Ages. A similar attitude existed even among educated people. Chernyshevsky quotes the example of Shakespeare. "We see," he says, "that only a few English poets of the last century understood Shakespeare, and very few people among the educated public were able to appreciate him. The rest continued for a very long time to adhere to the pompous rhetoric or cold primness which belonged to a degree of poetical development far below that of Shakespeare's realism. The same thing took place, and is still taking place today everywhere, in all departments of intellectual life."\*\*\*

To lag behind has always been the lot of the majority. And it continues to be today. But it does not follow from this that it always will be. The truth that has been won is so simple, so intelligible to everyone that it is far easier to accept than to discover it. And it will be accepted by the masses when it is brought to their notice.

Chernyshevsky sums up his view on the course of mankind's intellectual development as follows: "At the beginning, people of high intellectual development spring up from the ranks of the masses and, owing to their rapid advance, leave the masses farther and farther behind. But, on reaching very high degrees of

\* Ibid., p. 266.

\*\* Ibid., same page.

\*\*\* Ibid., p. 267.



development, the intellectual life of the advanced people assumes a character that becomes more and more intelligible to the common people, that corresponds more and more to the simple requirements of the masses. And in its relation to the intellectual life of the common people, the second, higher, half of historical intellectual life lies in a gradual reversion to that unity of popular life which existed at the very beginning, and was destroyed during the first half of the movement.”\*

According to Chernyshevsky, the truth that has been won corresponds to the requirements of the masses. What is this truth? It is obviously not the truth of mathematics or the natural sciences. The truth of mathematics and natural science bears no direct relation to the interests of the masses. And even if it did, a certain, more or less considerable special knowledge would be necessary in order to understand it. Chernyshevsky hints at a truth which concerns people's mutual relations in society. He believes that this truth has already been discovered by his West-European teachers—Feuerbach and the great representatives of utopian socialism: Robert Owen, Fourier and others. Therefore he assumes that the second half of mankind's historical intellectual life has already begun or is about to begin, that higher half in the course of which truth will finally be revealed and spread among the masses, as a result of which the masses will draw closer in their conceptions to the most advanced people. The possibility of the masses mastering the finally revealed truth is guaranteed, firstly, by its simplicity and, secondly, by its correspondence to the interests of the masses. The same self-interest, by which people are usually guided in their actions, will make the masses not only master the truth, but also embody it in their social life. This is how Chernyshevsky sees the future course of social development. Consciousness determines being, and therefore there is no need to examine precisely what sort of social being can help the masses to master social truth and to what extent. This truth is so simple that anyone capable of the most elementary calculation will understand it. This view of the future course of social development is diametrically opposed to that which we find in the founders of scientific socialism. When Marx and Engels made their famous “prognosis”, they appealed to the inner contradictions of capitalist society and showed that the necessary and inevitable development of these contradictions in capitalism would lead the overwhelming majority of producers to adopt new social ideals. Here the course of development of *consciousness* was regarded as a necessary consequence of a certain course of development of *being*. Chernyshevsky does not analyse the inner contradictions inherent in social being. He is content to note the fact that the

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\* Ibid., p. 268.

"form" of this being is at present unfavourable for the vast mass of the population everywhere. In his opinion this fact is enough to ensure that the masses will understand social truth. The extreme simplicity of this truth makes it intelligible to "common people" living under the most varied relations of production. Chernyshevsky saw the future course of development of being as a simple consequence of a certain achievement of consciousness. Marx and Engels regarded the question from the viewpoint of materialism. Chernyshevsky regarded the same question from the idealist viewpoint. The historical views of Marx and Engels were true to the materialist spirit of Feuerbachian philosophy. The historical views of Chernyshevsky were contrary to this spirit. Here it must be remembered, of course, that in his historical views Chernyshevsky's teacher was himself untrue to the main propositions of his philosophy, as Engels showed in his brochure *Ludwig Feuerbach*.

The excessively straightforward nature of Chernyshevsky's concept of progress is clearly evident in what he says about Shakespeare. It is true that only a very few educated Englishmen of the eighteenth century were able to appreciate the great merit of the brilliant dramatist's works and that the majority of the English public regarded him somewhat contemptuously. But the reason for this was not the majority's lack of knowledge. The fact is that whereas the greater part of the so-called educated public looked down on Shakespeare, the urban "common people", who possessed less literary knowledge, of course, than the "educated" people of their day, felt great sympathy for him which was frequently expressed somewhat violently. The explanation of this fact lies in certain features of class psychology in English society of the eighteenth and also the seventeenth century. Since the time of the Restoration the English aristocracy had sought to assimilate the tastes of the brilliant French nobility, which were far removed from Shakespeare's coarse and sometimes downright "vulgar" realism. But it was for this realism that the "common people" loved him. As we can see, the history of the Englishmen's view of Shakespeare was actually far more complicated than Chernyshevsky thought, who had forgotten once again his own splendid words to the effect that the history of opinion should not be regarded from the examination viewpoint: that people knew one thing, but did not know another, etc.

The review described above shows us once again that in his historical arguments our author often moved from an idealist to a materialist viewpoint, and vice versa. The interpretation of history which it contains is imbued with the spirit of idealism. But when Chernyshevsky examines the individual historical phenomena which determine the achievements of mankind's intellectual life he frequently reasons as a materialist.

"The difference in the material conditions of the estates created a difference in their intellectual life," he says. The achievements of mediaeval education were based, according to him, on the material resources at the disposal of the clergy, the middle estate and the feudal barons. Hence it follows that the development of thought was by no means the most profound cause of historical movement. On the contrary, it was itself determined by the economic development of society. Anyone can see that materialist views of this kind sharply contradict Chernyshevsky's historical idealism.

We already know that Chernyshevsky regarded feudalism as one of the "forms" which by their emergence and existence have hindered the advance of nations. This idealist view of feudalism is contradicted by his materialist view, to which we have just referred, that feudalism was a "form" which promoted the accumulation of knowledge and, consequently, the progressive advance of mankind. In order to remove this contradiction Chernyshevsky would have had to adhere consistently to either materialism or idealism. But such consistency was impossible for him as a representative of a transitional period in the development of the scientific interpretation of history: a period when materialism was already challenging idealism in this sphere, but when it was still far from victory and when idealism still had the last word.

We may be reminded that, as we have remarked, the reviews by Chernyshevsky which we have examined appeared after the historical views of Marx and Engels had been moulded into an harmonious whole. We are not forgetful of this. But we believe that this matter cannot be settled by mere reference to chronology. The main writings of Lassalle, also, did not appear until after the historical views of Marx and Engels had acquired an harmonious form, and yet, in ideological content, those writings, too, belong to the period of transition from historical idealism to historical materialism. The point is not when a particular work appeared but rather what was its content.

If in previous historical periods the advance of knowledge depended on the character of economic relations, in passing to our own period Chernyshevsky should have asked himself: What are its economic features that have led to the discovery of social truth and ensured the future realisation of the latter? But in order to ask himself that question, he should have broken resolutely with idealism and firmly adopted the materialist interpretation of history. We shall not reiterate that Chernyshevsky was still far from breaking with idealism and that his conception of the further trend of social development was completely idealist. We merely ask the reader to note that Chernyshevsky's historical idealism compelled him in his considerations of the future to give first place to the "advanced" people—to the *intellectuals*, as we

now call them—who were to disseminate the ultimately discovered social truth among the masses. The masses are allotted the role of straggling soldiers in an advancing army. Of course, no serious materialist will assert that the average “man in the street”, just because he is an ordinary person, i.e., “one of the masses”, knows as much as the average “intellectual”. Of course, he knows less. But it is not a matter of the knowledge of the “man in the street”, but of his actions. People’s actions are not always determined by their knowledge and are never determined *only* by their knowledge, but also—and chiefly—by their position, which is merely made clear and comprehensible by the knowledge they possess. Here again one has to remember the fundamental proposition of materialism in general, and of the materialist interpretation of history in particular: it is not being that is determined by consciousness but consciousness by being. The “consciousness” of a man from the “intelligentsia” is more highly developed than the consciousness of a man from the “masses”. But the “being” of a man from the masses prescribes to him a far more definite method of action than that which the social position of the intellectual prescribes to the latter. That is why the materialist view of history allows one only in a certain and, moreover, very limited sense to speak of the backwardness of the man from the “masses”, compared with the man from the “intelligentsia”; in a certain sense the “man in the street” undoubtedly lags behind the “intellectual”, but in another sense he is undoubtedly in advance of him. And precisely because this is so, an adherent of the materialist interpretation of history, while by no means repeating the absurd attacks on the intelligentsia that are coming from the reactionary and syndicalist camp, would never agree to assign the intelligentsia the role of a demiurge of history, which is generally assigned to it by idealists. There are various kinds of aristocraticalness. Historical idealism is guilty of an “aristocraticalness of knowledge”.

What in Chernyshevsky’s historical views was a shortcoming resulting from the insufficient elaboration of Feuerbach’s materialism, later became the basis of our subjectivism, which had nothing in common with materialism and vigorously opposed it not only in the field of history but also in the field of philosophy. The subjectivists boastfully called themselves continuers of the best traditions of the sixties. In reality, they continued only the weak aspects of the world outlook peculiar to that period. The strong aspects of the world outlook of the same period provided the foundation for the views of the materialist opponents of “subjectivism”. On this basis it is not hard to answer the question of who, in fact, was most loyal to the best traditions of the sixties.

Speaking of the “subjectivists”, we cannot help recalling their once frequent and verbose arguments on “the role of the individual

in history". Were the "subjectivists" right in asserting that these arguments repeated and developed the views of our great "enlighteners"? Yes and no. The idealist view of history, as we have already seen, necessarily allots a dreadfully exaggerated role to "progressive individuals". And in so far as Chernyshevsky, for example, adhered to this idealism, his view of the role of the individual in history was close to the "subjectivist" view. But we already know that his world outlook also contained the embryo of the materialist interpretation of history. And in so far as it did, Chernyshevsky's view of the subject of interest to us here was extremely far removed from the "subjectivist" view.

In Granovsky's Speech on the Present State and Significance of Universal History, which Chernyshevsky praised so unreservedly, the following words of Academician Ber are quoted: "The course of world history is determined by external physical conditions. The influence of individuals is trivial by comparison with them. They have almost always merely carried out that which was already prepared and was bound to take place in any case. The urge to establish something entirely new and unprepared remains unsuccessful or entails nothing but destruction."\* Granovsky says nothing against this view. Nor does Chernyshevsky in his article on Granovsky. But how does this view relate to the view of the supporters of the materialist interpretation of history? It is a hint at it, the first step of scientific thought in the direction in which Marx and Engels subsequently advanced so successfully. "Individuals" have indeed always carried out only that which was already prepared. Here Ber is right. But he makes a great mistake when he compares the influence of individuals with the influence of external physical conditions. The influence of the latter has rarely been direct. More often physical conditions have influenced history only indirectly, only through the agency of the social relations produced by them. Therefore the influence of individuals should have been compared not with the influence of external physical conditions, but with the influence of social relations. However, methodologically this comparison too runs the risk of being very inaccurate, because social relations are relations between people and not between metaphysical entities which may concern people but nevertheless seem to be opposed to them. In fact history is made by people, but they make it in one way and not in another, not because they consciously want to make it like that, but because their actions are determined by conditions independent of their will. Among these conditions one must, of course, mention external physical conditions; but pride of place must be allotted to those production relations that arise on the basis of the given productive forces, which in their turn depend

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\* Granovsky, *Works*, pp. 34-35.

to a considerable extent on the geographical environment. Ber makes clear allusions to all this: he speaks, for example, of the influence of external nature on the social relations of individual nations. But what was correct in these clear allusions was properly developed only in the historical materialism of Marx and Engels.

In his work on Lessing Chernyshevsky formulates his view of the possible role of individuals in history as follows:

"The course of great world events is as inevitable and irreversible as the current of a great river: no cliff, no precipice can hold it back, to say nothing of artificially constructed dams: no force can span the Rhine or Volga with a dam, and the almighty river casts upon the shore with a single thrust all the piles and rubbish with which the audacious hand of the madman sought to obstruct its flow; the sole result of such a foolhardy policy is that the shore, which would have drunk of the river and bloomed as a verdant meadow, is lacerated and disfigured for a time by the wrath of the offended wave—but the river continues on its way, floods all precipices, bursts through mountain tops and reaches the ocean whither it flows. The occurrence of great world events does not depend on any man's will or on any individual. They take place in accordance with a law as immutable as the law of gravity or organic growth. But whether a world event takes place more quickly or more slowly, in this way or that—this depends on circumstances which cannot be foreseen and determined in advance. The most important of these circumstances is the emergence of strong individuals who by the nature of their activity lend this or that nature to the immutable trend of events, accelerate or retard its course, and by their predominant strength impart regularity to the chaotic agitation of the forces which have set the masses in motion."\*

These thoughts require the addition of two remarks only.

Firstly, the emergence of strong individuals is also not accidental. It has long been noted that strong individuals often emerge in history at a time when there is a great demand for them. What is the reason for this? It is simply that strong individuals of this sort cannot find an application for their abilities in all types of social system. For example, no one would dispute the fact that the strong personality of Napoleon left an extremely profound imprint on a certain historical period. But special historical conditions were required in order that Napoleon's strength might develop fully. Had the ancien régime lasted thirty years longer, we do not know what Napoleon's life would have been. It is said that a few years before the revolution he wanted to go to Russia and serve in the Russian army. Obviously the ca-

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\* *Works*, Vol. III, pp. 644-45.

reer that awaited him there would under no circumstances have led him to rule the world. And Napoleon's marshals? In 1789 Ney, Murat and Soult were non-commissioned officers. Had the revolution not taken place, they might never have seen officers' epaulettes. In the same year, i.e., the year when the revolution broke out, Augereau was a simple teacher of fencing, Lannes a dyer, Gouvion Saint-Cyr an actor, Marmont a compositor, Junot a student of law, etc. All these people had great military talent. But the ancien régime would not have allowed this talent to develop; it is a fact that in the reign of Louis XV only one person who was not of noble birth reached the rank of lieutenant-general, and under Louis XVI a military career was even more difficult for people who were not of noble descent.\* Hence it follows that the social relations which exist at a given time in a given nation determine whether the way will be clear in a given sphere for a certain category of strong individuals. And since any given form of social relations is something quite logical, it is clear that the appearance of strong individuals in the arena of history has its own logic.

Secondly, it is true that, once having appeared in the historical arena, a strong individual accelerates the course of events by his activity. But here too it is obvious that the extent of the acceleration depends on the features of the social environment in which the strong individual acts.

With these reservations Chernyshevsky's view is perfectly acceptable to supporters of the modern materialist explanation of history. It does not require much perspicacity to see how far this view is from the teaching of our subjective sociologists. These gentlemen have the delightful habit of accusing Marx's "disciples" of renouncing the heritage of the sixties. But if one compares their jeremiads with what Chernyshevsky says about the role of the individual in the passage just quoted, it will be clear that these jeremiads could be directed with equal justification—or rather, with the same complete lack of logical justification—at Chernyshevsky, as they were directed at the Marxists. Here, as in all other respects, only the Marxists have remained true to the finest behests of our great "enlighteners" of the sixties.

## *Chapter Six*

### The Last Historical Works of Chernyshevsky

As already mentioned, on his return from Siberia Chernyshevsky engaged, inter alia, in the translation of Weber's *Allgemeine Geschichte* and supplied some of the volumes of his translation with

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\* For more about this see my article "On the Question of the Individual's Role in History" in the symposium *Twenty Years*.<sup>112</sup>

supplements which are most important for a description of his historical views. We shall examine some of them here.

All these supplements are devoted to the exposition of "scientific conceptions of certain questions of world history". For very obvious reasons the supplement of the greatest interest to us is that which examines the elements which, in Chernyshevsky's opinion, promote progress.

For Chernyshevsky progress means the improvement of human concepts and customs. Therefore for him the question of the causes that give rise to progress is the same as the question as to what promotes the said improvement.

Chernyshevsky says that all the advantages that human life enjoys over the life of animals are the result of man's intellectual superiority. He therefore regards man's intellectual development as the principal force which elevates human life. Of course, intellectual power may and in fact frequently does produce harmful results; but it produces them, to quote Chernyshevsky, only under the influence of forces and circumstances which distort its inherent nature. "In itself, intellectual development tends to improve a man's conceptions of his duties towards other people," he says, "to make him more benevolent, to develop his conception of justice and honesty."\*

This, as we can see, is the same view that Chernyshevsky expressed earlier in his notes on Guizot's books. There is no need to point out that the view according to which intellectual development is the main driving force of progress is an idealist view.

Firmly entrenched in his idealist viewpoint, Chernyshevsky argues, most logically in his way, that, since every change in the life of a nation is the sum of the changes that have taken place in the lives of the individuals who make up the nation, in an examination of the circumstances which promote or hinder the improvement of a nation's intellectual and moral life we must ascertain what circumstances improve or mar the intellectual and moral qualities of the individual.

Political economy, which was the first of the social sciences to work out exact concepts of the conditions of progress, established as an indefeasible principle that only a man's voluntary actions produce good results, whereas everything a man does under external compulsion turns out to be very bad. Applying this truth to the question of what determines the success of material human labour we arrive at the conclusion that "all forms of forced labour are unproductive, and that material prosperity can be enjoyed only by a society in which the people till the land, make clothing and build houses, each being personally convinced that the work in which he is engaged is useful for him".\*\*

\* *Works*, Vol. X, Part 2, Section IV, p. 170.

\*\* *Ibid.*, p. 171.



Applying the same principle to the question of the acquisition and preservation of intellectual and moral riches, we arrive at the conclusion that "no external coercion can keep a man on a high intellectual or moral level if he himself does not wish to remain there".\*

These conclusions, which Chernyshevsky supports with a number of pedagogical arguments, are not only of theoretical but also of practical importance in his eyes. Educated nations usually regard wild savages as children whose upbringing is to be directed forcibly to a certain noble aim. The educated estate in civilised nations regards the ignorant masses in their own country in the same way. Chernyshevsky objects to this view most forcefully. He says that even the rudest of savages are not children, but adults, exactly as we are. But even if we were to assume that this false comparison of savages and uneducated people with children were correct, we would still not have the slightest right to resort to coercion in the education of savages or "common people" because, as we already know, coercion never leads to anything good. "If we, the educated people of a given nation," says our author, "wish to benefit the mass of our fellow countrymen who have bad habits that are harmful to them, our duty is to acquaint them with good habits and to strive to make it possible for them to assimilate these good habits. It is totally useless to resort to coercion.... Scientists who want the government of any civilised country to take forcible measures in order to change the life of its nation are less enlightened than the rulers of the Turkish state."\*\*

Here we shall make a comparison which, one might say, begs to be made. The General Rules of the International written by Marx open with the famous statement that "the emancipation of the working class must be conquered by the working classes themselves".<sup>113</sup> This is, if you like, the same idea that Chernyshevsky is defending here. But in formulating this idea Marx turns directly to the proletariat, whereas Chernyshevsky has in mind those more or less well-educated people who wish to engage in improving the lot of the working class. This radical difference is fully in keeping with the above-mentioned feature of Chernyshevsky's historical views, by virtue of which he saw the intellectuals as the real active detachment in history, whereas the mass of the "common people" reminded him of the stragglers in an army. We have already said that this feature has a close causal connection with the idealist nature of our author's historical views.

The question of coercion led him logically to the question of "the cases in which reason and conscience can justify conquest".\*\*\*

\* Ibid., p. 171.

\*\* Ibid., pp. 175-76.

\*\*\* Ibid., p. 176.

Chernyshevsky says that all these cases come within the concept of self-defence. A stronger nation is always in a position to arrange its relations with a weaker one in such a way as to live in peace with it. The conquest of nations is always a violation of justice. But this applies to settled peoples. Chernyshevsky takes a different view of nomads. Some nomads are peaceful; conquest of them is wrong. But many nomads engage in plundering their neighbours; conquest of them is justified by reason and conscience. Then the question arises as to whether the civilised conquerors have the right to force the conquered nomads to change their customs. Chernyshevsky replies that they have in so far as it is necessary to put a stop to plundering. The only trouble is that civilised conquerors usually think only of the benefit to themselves, and not of the benefit to the conquered. This is why they resort to coercion in the first place; but if they were to think of the benefit to the conquered, they would remember that good results are obtained not by coercion, but by gentleness and relaxation of coercion.

There exists a great deal of seemingly convincing historical evidence, however, that coercion has improved the habits of savages. What are we to think of this? Chernyshevsky replies: "The historian who is familiar with the laws of human nature can have no doubt that all stories of this kind are pure fiction. His task in relation to them is to explain how they arose, to find the source of the errors, or the motives for the deliberate lies that gave rise to them."\*

The Enlighteners of the eighteenth century, like the utopian socialists of the nineteenth, readily appealed to human nature in their historical discussions. But appealing to human nature, although it may sometimes be useful in an agitational sense, has never been beneficial to history as a science. If human nature is unchanging, it cannot explain anything in history, the process of which consists of constant change. If, however, human nature changes under the influence of historical changes, it is obvious that the latter cannot be explained by it. These general considerations are also perfectly applicable to Chernyshevsky's arguments outlined above. He says that all coercion leads to harmful consequences. But what nation is not guilty of coercion? The Slavophiles once used to say that the Russian state, unlike the states of Western Europe, was founded on consent and not on conquest. But in all probability Chernyshevsky himself regarded this theory as nothing but pure fantasy. No nation has ever renounced the use of force in the numerous cases when it has promised to be of benefit to the nation in question. Yet the historical fate of nations is by no means identical. How is the difference to be explained? The same question may be put in respect of the

\* Ibid., p. 178.

inner development of each society. There is no nation in whose inner development coercion has not played a part. Yet the inner development of the different nations also varies. It is obviously not enough to look to coercion for an explanation of this. Finally, the very possibility of the misuse of power is created by conditions which cannot be explained by coercion. We have already said that at different stages of historical development the so-called art of warfare has a different character, which is determined in the final analysis by the economic relations of society. Chernyshevsky himself also expresses such views on occasion. Thus, for example, in his supplements to Volume IX of Weber, entitled *On Differences in National Character Between Peoples*, he points to the facts which, in his opinion, transformed the composition of the Roman army and in so doing reduced its strength, thereby preparing the fall of the Roman Empire. According to him, as the borders of the Roman state were extended, the people became increasingly divided into two classes: the majority of the citizens gave up military service, because the long military campaigns prevented them from leading a domestic life, and the minority abandoned a domestic life entirely and became professional soldiers. This caused profound changes in the political structure of Rome, which weakened its power of resistance, etc. Here military strength is made closely dependent on certain economic conditions. And Chernyshevsky emphasises this dependence. "Ever since historians have deemed it necessary to study political economy and to talk about division of labour, they themselves have been explaining in their books on the latter period of the Roman Republic and on the Roman Empire what economic forces caused the transformation of the army from one of citizen soldiers to one of professional soldiers, and later caused the replacement of Italian soldiers by natives of the less civilised regions and by foreign barbarians. Consequently it is high time to abandon the fantastic idea about the degeneration of the Romans and to say merely that the greater part of the soldiers who waged war unceasingly on the remote frontiers and lived there in fortified camps was no longer drawn from the Italian population. Thus, the fall of the Roman Empire and the conquest of Italy by the barbarians is sufficiently explained by this one fact of the change which the enormous conquests by the Romans had brought about in the composition of their army."\*

Had Chernyshevsky consistently elaborated the idea expressed here, he would have had to renounce completely the idealist views expressed by him in the article—now familiar to us—concerning the causes of the fall of Rome. But the fact is that he expresses such ideas only in passing and does not enlarge upon them. In expressing them, he does not find it at all necessary to

\* *Works*, Vol. X, Part 2, Section IV, p. 143.

repudiate historical idealism, and this is not due to a predilection for idealism as a philosophical theory. Chernyshevsky's attitude to this theory was in general extremely negative. While expounding the idealist view of the course of historical development, he continues to regard himself as a consistent materialist. He is wrong. But the root of his error lies in one of the chief shortcomings of Feuerbach's materialist system. Marx expressed it rather aptly: "Feuerbach wants sensuous objects, really distinct from conceptual objects, but he does not conceive human activity itself as *objective* activity. In *Das Wesen des Christenthums*, he therefore regards the theoretical attitude as the only genuinely human attitude...."\* Like his teacher, Chernyshevsky concentrates his attention almost exclusively on the "theoretical" activity of mankind, and, as a result, intellectual development becomes for him the most basic cause of historical movement. Reading his argument about the harmful nature of coercion, one might think sometimes that he simply wants to give mankind some good advice. And, of course, he is not averse to giving such advice. But what he says about coercion is also of great theoretical importance for him. He sees coercion as a factor which distorts human nature. And we already know that for him human nature was the main instance to which he appealed in his explanation of history.

Human nature, like everything else, can be seen from various points of view. Chernyshevsky took a materialist view of it. But when he tried to apply his materialist interpretation of human nature to the explanation of history, in the vast majority of cases he arrived at idealist conclusions without realising it. Incidentally, the same thing had happened before to people who adhered to the materialism which we shall call *pre-Marxian*. The materialists of the eighteenth century were also idealists in history.

In his historical reasoning Chernyshevsky proceeds from the indisputably materialist idea that man is an animal whose organism is subject to definite laws of physiology. Physiology tells us that the normal functioning of the life of an animal demands the normal satisfaction of the requirements of its organism: "it differentiates strictly between the proper functioning of the organism and its malfunctioning; appetite and its result, the timely consumption of food in a quantity which corresponds to the needs of the organism, it places in the category of those facts of life which are of benefit to the organism; hunger and its results—in the category of facts which are harmful to the organism".\*\* And the same differentiation between the proper function-

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\* See his theses on Feuerbach written as early as the spring of 1845.<sup>114</sup>

\*\* Ibid., p. 217.

ing and the malfunctioning of the organism is applied by Chernyshevsky to history. He condemns coercion as one of the factors which hinder the proper functioning of the human organism. But how can the proper functioning or malfunctioning of the human organism explain the fact of human progress? Like this.

"Physiology shows that if the human organisation has improved, and not deteriorated, compared with its original state, the functioning of the life of mankind has contained more elements which favoured the improvement of its organisation than those tending to deteriorate it. It is by this preponderance of circumstances favourable to the organism over those which are harmful to it that physiology explains man's progress from his primitive state to the comparatively very high development of his mental powers, when he was already able to make flints in order to acquire tools. Without doubt, during this progress people suffered a great deal from hunger, the harmful phenomena of external nature, poisonous insects and snakes, powerful beasts of prey, their own unreasoned actions and bad mutual relations. But however great the sum of these misfortunes, it was less than the sum of facts beneficial to the human organism. Otherwise man's organisation would not have improved, but deteriorated, and he would have undergone what is called in zoology a degradation, a lowering of organisation."\*

This passage shows clearly how Chernyshevsky applied physiological arguments to the explanation of the facts of human progress. But in this passage these arguments are applied only to the period which might be called pre-historic or, to be more precise, pre-cultural in the strictest sense of the word, i.e., to the period which ended with man acquiring the ability to make himself stone tools. Here too Chernyshevsky continues to hold a materialist viewpoint, although here too his materialism displays a metaphysical nature. In fact, basing himself on the laws of physiology, Chernyshevsky reiterates an idea which we have encountered earlier—when examining his article on Darwin's theory—the idea that the harmful is always harmful and can never do good.\*\* These views, the theoretical weakness of which we revealed above, are closely related to historical idealism; but the inherent character of this idealism affects them only indirectly, and primarily from the methodological aspect. To understand how Chernyshevsky makes the transition from his physiological viewpoint to the point of historical idealism, one must take into consideration his idea that the "proper functioning" of the human organism led to the development of the brain, which in-

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\* Ibid., p. 224.

\*\* Ibid., p. 217 et seq.

creased man's mental powers and thereby accelerated the progress of his knowledge. Darwin says: "Man could not have attained his present dominant position in the world without the use of his hands, which are so admirably adapted to act in obedience to his will."\* The same idea was expressed by Helvétius. It is also found in Chernyshevsky. But in his case it immediately assumes a specific character. "It is said, and in all probability it is true," he remarks, "that the ability to pick up a piece of rock, or a club, and use it against an enemy enhanced people's security, made it possible for them to improve their material conditions of life, and, as a result of this improvement, to acquire more highly developed mental faculties."\*\* The ability to pick up a certain weapon increases man's security, makes it possible for him to satisfy his material needs better and thereby ensures the development of the *organ of thought*—the brain. The fact is that, due to certain specific features of the history of his ancestors, man's brain developed to a degree not attained by any other creatures similar to man. What exactly these specific features were remains unknown. But it is quite probable, in Chernyshevsky's opinion, that owing to some fortunate circumstance man's ancestors obtained greater security against their enemies than the other creatures that were similar or identical to them. "But by some means, owing to the influence of certain favourable circumstances of their lives, man's ancestors attained such a high degree of mental development that they became human. It is only from this period that the history of their life commences which gives rise to questions not of a general physiological nature, but relating specifically to human life."\*\*\* These latter questions are solved in the history of mankind by the development of the intellect and knowledge. "It is superior mentality that explains the whole of the subsequent progress of human life," says Chernyshevsky.\*\*\*\* Here we can see with remarkable clarity how Chernyshevsky, who manages somehow or other to adhere to a materialist point of view in his discussions of the *human organism*, immediately becomes an idealist as soon as it is a matter of the *history of mankind*.

His arguments run as follows. He begins with Feuerbach's proposition that man is what he eats. When the human organism is properly fed, when external conditions ensure its proper func-

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\* *La descendance de l'homme*, etc., Paris, 1881, p. 5. [Plekhanov is quoting from the French translation of Charles Darwin's *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex*. [We are quoting from the original, London, John Murray, 1887, p. 51.]

\*\* *Works*, Vol. X, Part 2, Section IV, p. 183.

\*\*\* *Ibid.*, p. 182.

\*\*\*\* *Ibid.*, pp. 182-83.

tioning, the power of the brain increases, and with this increase in the power of the brain man's capacity for mental development and the elaboration of correct *concepts* grows. And this capacity is the mainspring of historical progress. Thus, Chernyshevsky remains a consistent materialist as long as he does not leave the sphere of questions "of a general physiological nature". And as soon as he is confronted with questions "relating specifically to human life", his physiological materialism throws the door open to historical idealism. The example of Chernyshevsky shows, perhaps better than any other, of how little use materialism in the form which it had in Feuerbach was for the explanation of historical development.

We have already said on several occasions that the idealist nature of Chernyshevsky's historical views did not prevent him in the slightest from providing a materialist explanation of individual historical phenomena. And we would not have reiterated this here, had we not felt obliged to make a certain, most natural, to our mind, reservation. Anyone who would look in the works of our author for a materialist explanation of individual historical events, should beware of the mistake which is sometimes very easily made, as a result of a certain *external* similarity between Chernyshevsky's idealist devices and the devices of the materialist explanation of history.

The fact is that in keeping with the exaggerated importance which Chernyshevsky attached to human self-interest, he occasionally explains historical events also in terms of conscious calculation of benefit in cases where one should turn for an explanation of them to the forces of economic development, which are not subject to human control. At first glance such explanations by Chernyshevsky may sometimes suggest that in his historical theories he has adopted the viewpoint of modern materialism entirely. But careful inspection of the matter reveals the complete opposite. Anyone who sees in people's historical activity only the influence of conscious calculation, is still a pure idealist and still very far from an understanding of the power and significance of "economics". In fact its influence extends to such human actions and habits of different social classes where there cannot be the slightest question of conscious calculation. The major and most influential factors of economic development are still beyond the control of conscious calculation. All social relations, all moral customs and all mental inclinations are formed under the direct or indirect influence of these blind forces of economic development. Incidentally it is they which determine all the types of human self-interest, all the manifestations of human egoism. Consequently, one cannot speak of the conscious calculation of benefit as the mainspring of social development. *Such* a view of history contradicts the teaching of modern mate-

rialism. It reveals the main feature of historical idealism: the belief that "opinion rules the world".\*

Chernyshevsky adhered to this view throughout his life. That is why we place him among the representatives of historical idealism. And anyone who is familiar with his writings will hardly fail to admit that there have been few writers in the history of world literature whose historical idealism was as strongly pronounced as Chernyshevsky's. But it is interesting that it is in Chernyshevsky, who objected to Guizot's optimism, that historical idealism in its turn assumed an original touch of optimism. This is most clear from his discussions of the historical role of coercion.

Coercion, as we know, is most harmful to the tribes and peoples against whom it is used. But it does not harm them alone: it is equally harmful to the people who use it. History shows, according to Chernyshevsky, that those nations who thought to benefit from harming mankind were quite wrong in their calculations. "Aggressive peoples have always ended up by being destroyed and enslaved themselves."\*\*

We might ask whether there is much hope that the English, for example, who settled in Australia after wiping out the black-skinned aborigines almost entirely, "will be destroyed and enslaved themselves". We consider that for the time being these Englishmen face no threat of destruction or enslavement. And if they ever should experience the fate of destroyed and enslaved peoples, their misfortune would hardly have any connection with the unjust actions which they permitted themselves in respect of the Australian aborigines. This is so obvious that there is no need to expand on it. It follows from Chernyshevsky that in history vice is always punished as it deserves. In reality, however, the historical facts known to us do not at all warrant this view, which may be comforting but is certainly naive. The only question of interest to us is how it came to be held by our author. This question can be answered by reference to the period in which Chernyshevsky lived. It was a period of social upsurge, a period which had a moral need, so to say, for such views as would bolster faith in the inevitable defeat of evil.

In Chernyshevsky's works written on his return from Siberia one also encounters some remarkably apt comments imbued with the spirit of the *materialist explanation of history*. The reader will find many such comments, for example, in the supplement to Volume VII of Weber (*On Races*), Volume VIII (*On the Classification of People by Language*) and, finally, and particularly, in the supplement already quoted by us to Volume IX (*On Differences in National Character Between Peoples*).

\* Anyone who is familiar with R. Owen's views will know that he too attributed an exaggerated importance to the calculation of benefit.

\*\* *Works*, Vol. VI, 233.



### SECTION THREE

## N. G. CHERNYSHEVSKY'S LITERARY VIEWS

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### *Chapter One*

#### **The Significance of Literature and Art**

The intellectual progress of mankind is, in Chernyshevsky's opinion, the mainspring of historical progress. Literature is the expression of the intellectual life of nations. Therefore one might, perhaps, expect Chernyshevsky to ascribe to literature the main role in the history of civilisation. In fact he does not. The main role in the history of civilisation is assigned by him not to literature, but to science. Concerning the latter he says: "Working quietly and slowly, it creates everything; the knowledge produced by it provides the foundation for all the concepts and then all the activity of mankind, gives direction to all mankind's aspirations and strength to all its capabilities."\* Not so with literature. Its role in the historical process has never been entirely without importance, but it has almost always been a secondary one.

"Thus, for example," says Chernyshevsky, "in the ancient world we do not find a single period in which historical progress took place predominantly under the influence of literature. In spite of the Greeks' passion for poetry, the course of their life was conditioned not by literary influences, but by religious, tribal and military aspirations and, subsequently, also by political and economic questions. Literature, like art, was the finest adornment, but only an adornment, not the mainspring, not the prime motive force of their life. Roman life was developed by military and political struggle and by the juridical relations that were taking shape; for the Romans literature was merely a noble relaxation from political activity. In Italy's splendid age, when it had Dante, Ariosto and Tasso, it was again not literature that served as the fundamental element of life, but the struggle of political parties and economic relations: these interests, and not the influence of Dante, decided the fate of his country both during his lifetime and after it. In England, which boasts the greatest poet of the Christian world and more first-class writers than one could per-

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\* See his work: "Lessing, His Age, His Life and His Work", *Works*, Vol. III, p. 585.

haps find in the literature of the rest of Europe taken together—in England the fate of the nation has never depended on literature, but has been determined by religious, political and economic relations, parliamentary debates and newspaper polemics: so-called literature as such has in fact always exerted only a secondary influence on the historical development of this country. And this has been the position of literature almost always, among almost all historical peoples.”\*

Chernyshevsky knows of only a very few cases which are an exception to the general rule outlined by him. Among these few cases one of the most important is German literature of the second half of the eighteenth and the early years of the nineteenth century. “From the beginning of Lessing’s activity to the death of Schiller ... for fifty years, the development of one of the greatest European nations, the future of the countries from the Baltic to the Mediterranean, from the Rhine to the Oder, was determined by a literary movement. The role of all other social forces and events in its national development must be considered insignificant by comparison with the influence of literature. Nothing at that time assisted its beneficial effect on the fate of the German nation; on the contrary, almost all other relations and conditions on which life depends did not favour the country’s development. Literature alone led it on, fighting against countless obstacles.”\*\*

Chernyshevsky evidently attached the same exceptional importance to the role of Russian literature since the Gogol period. Before Gogol Russian literature was still in what one might call the preparatory periods of its development: each preceding period was of importance for it not so much because of the indisputable merit of the literary phenomena which marked it, as because of the fact that it prepared the following period. In order to explain this idea of his, it should suffice to show how he saw the relationship of the Pushkin period of our literature to the Gogol period. He regarded Pushkin in exactly the same way as Belinsky did in the final period of his activity. He thought very highly of Pushkin’s poetry, but considered it predominantly poetry of *form*. The perfecting of form was the historical task which fell to the lot of the Pushkin period of our literature. When this task had been solved, a new period began in our literature, marked by the fact that the main concern became *content*, and not form as before. This period is associated with the name of Gogol. During the Gogol period our literature began to become what it was supposed to be, i.e., the expression of national consciousness. It continued to develop in the same direction later, when under the influence of Gogol the so-called naturalist school emerged in our country.

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\* Ibid., p. 586.

\*\* Ibid., pp. 586-87.

Chernyshevsky thought most highly of this new trend in our literature. But it by no means satisfied him entirely. In his *Essays on the Gogol Period of Russian Literature* he makes the following reservation:

"In order not to give rise to the misunderstanding that we are extolling the new over the old excessively, we would say here that the present period of Russian literature too, in spite of all its intrinsic merits, is of fundamental importance, for the most part, simply because it is a preparation for the future development of our literature. So great is our belief in a better future that we say without hesitation even of Gogol: we shall have writers who will be as superior to him as he has become to his predecessors. The question is only how soon this time will come. How splendid it would be if our generation were to see this better future."\*

In maintaining that literature should be the expression of social consciousness, Chernyshevsky is voicing an idea which came to us from Germany and played a great role in our literary criticism from the time of Nadezhdin and Belinsky. But with him it immediately assumes the rational nature characteristic of all periods of "enlightenment". In fact there is no literature which has not served as the expression of the consciousness of the society or that section of society which engendered it. Even in periods when the so-called theory of art for art's sake reigns supreme and when artists appear to turn their back on everything that bears the slightest relation to social interests, literature does not cease to express the tastes, views and aspirations of the ruling class in that society. The fact that the theory in question acquires predominance in it merely proves that the ruling class or, at least, that section of it to which the artists are addressing themselves, is completely indifferent to the great social questions. But this indifference too is merely a type of social (or class, or group) mood, i.e., consciousness. In this sense there can be no doubt that our literature of the Pushkin or even of the Karamzin period expressed our social consciousness. But, according to Chernyshevsky, it begins to express it only in the Gogol period. Only then do our artists, according to him, stop concerning themselves exclusively with the form of their works and begin to attach importance to their content. This would seem to be incorrect, because nobody could say that Pushkin was indifferent to the content of his *Yevgeny Onegin*, for example. But between *Yevgeny Onegin*, on the one hand, and *The Inspector General* or *Dead Souls*, on the other, there is a tremendous difference in the artist's attitude to the phenomena portrayed. Pushkin is not averse to reproving his characters for their shallowness, narrow-mindedness, egoism, etc., typical of high society; but his *Onegin* does not

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\* *Works*, Vol. II, p. 172, note.

contain even a hint of the total rejection of the social life portrayed by him which one finds, albeit without the author's knowledge, in the above-mentioned works by Gogol. And it is this element of rejection of the old social order that Chernyshevsky calls the source of social consciousness. If he expected in future, as we have just seen, the appearance of writers who would become as superior to Gogol as Gogol was to his predecessors, this was for him tantamount to the conviction that with time our great artists would excel the author of *Dead Souls* by far in the consciousness of their negative attitude to obsolete social and family customs. The main duty of the literary critic was, in his eyes, to spread this consciousness among artists. The more this consciousness was spread among Russian artists, the more our literature would mature for the great role which, according to Chernyshevsky, it was to play in the transition period of that time.

Subsequently Pisarev ascribed to Chernyshevsky the intention of destroying aesthetics. He was wrong. How far Chernyshevsky was from such an intention can be seen from the following passage from his article on Aristotle's *Poetics* published in 1854 in Ordynsky's Russian translation (*Otechestvenniye Zapiski*, 1854, No. 9). "Aesthetics is a lifeless science! We do not say that there are no sciences more alive than it is; but it would be a good thing for us to think of these sciences. No, we praise other sciences that are of far less lively interest. Aesthetics is a barren science! In reply to this we would ask: do we still remember Lessing, Goethe and Schiller, or have they lost the right to be remembered by us since we became acquainted with Thackeray? Do we recognise the merits of German poetry of the latter half of the last century?"\*

In asking the critics of aesthetics ironically whether we recognise the merits of German poetry of the latter half of the eighteenth century, Chernyshevsky is, as it were, reminding us that there are periods when literature plays a great social role. But German literature of the period in question was not at all indifferent to aesthetic questions. On the contrary, it concerned itself with them a great deal at that time and for this reason alone it was able to perform successfully the great role which fell to it. It must not be forgotten that Chernyshevsky considered Lessing the finest figure in German literature of this period: "All the most important of the subsequent German writers, even Schiller, even Goethe himself at the height of his activity, were his disciples."\*\* And Lessing was mainly a theoretician of literature and art; the sphere in which he did most was that of aesthetics.

Chernyshevsky says that if poetry, literature and art are regarded as subjects of great importance, general questions of the

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\* *Works*, Vol. I, pp. 28-29.

\*\* *Works*, Vol. III, p. 589.

theory of literature too should be of extreme interest. "In short," he adds, "we think that the whole dispute against aesthetics is based on a misunderstanding, on a mistaken conception of the nature of aesthetics and of theoretical science in general."\*

Chernyshevsky asks the reader: "Who, in your opinion, stands higher—Pushkin or Gogol?" According to him, the answer to this question depends on one's concept of the essence and significance of art. These concepts acquire a correct form already in the works of Aristotle and Plato. This is why Chernyshevsky considers it necessary to acquaint the reader with the aesthetic theories of these thinkers. As a firm opponent of philosophical idealism our author could not, of course, sympathise with the philosophy of Plato as a whole. But this did not prevent him from sympathising most warmly with the viewpoint from which the great Greek idealist regarded art.

Chernyshevsky says: "He looked upon science and art, as upon everything else, not from the scientific or artistic point of view, but from the social and moral point of view. Man does not exist for art or science (as many of the great philosophers, including Aristotle, thought); science and art must serve for the good of mankind."\*\*

This point of view should, according to our author, have led Plato to a negative view of art which in his time was almost exclusively a pastime, a beautiful and noble one, but nevertheless a pastime for people who had nothing else to do but admire more or less voluptuous paintings or statues and revel in more or less voluptuous verse. For Plato the question of art was decided precisely by the fact that art was nothing more than a pastime. And when Plato saw it as a simple pastime he did not malign it. As proof of this Chernyshevsky refers to "one of the most serious of the poets", Schiller, who, of course, was not hostile to art. In Schiller's opinion Kant was quite right in calling art play (*das Spiel*), because a man is fully a man only when he is playing.

Chernyshevsky considers Plato's polemic against art excessively harsh; but he finds much that is true in it. "And it would be easy to show," he remarks, "that many of his stern strictures are still true today in respect of modern art."\*\*\* One need hardly add that to a very high degree this fact explains his warm sympathy for Plato's stern strictures.

Plato criticised art for being useless to man. Our author is just as ready as Plato to censure art which is useless to man. In his opinion, the idea that art should not be useful, that it exists for its own sake, is just as strange as the idea of "wealth for wealth's sake", "science for science's sake", etc. "All human activity must

\* *Works*, Vol. I, p. 28.

\*\* *Ibid.*, p. 31.

\*\*\* *Ibid.*, p. 32.

serve mankind if it is not to remain a useless and idle occupation. Wealth exists in order that man may benefit from it; science exists in order to be man's guide; art, too, must serve some useful purpose and not fruitless pleasure."\*

What then is the benefit which art brings man?

It is usually said that aesthetic enjoyment softens man's heart and elevates his soul. Chernyshevsky regards this idea as correct, but he does not wish to deduce any great significance of art from it. He agrees, of course, that when a man leaves an art gallery or theatre he feels kinder and better, at least for the short time that the aesthetic impressions he has received are still fresh; but he reminds us that a man who has had a good meal is kinder than a hungry man. Thus, in this respect there is no difference between the influence of art and the influence which the satisfaction of man's physical requirements has upon him. "The beneficial influence of art as art (irrespective of the content of a particular work)," says Chernyshevsky, "lies almost exclusively in the fact that art is a pleasant thing; all other pleasant occupations, relations, and objects upon which a 'good mood' depends, possess the same beneficial quality. A healthy man is much less selfish, much more benevolent than a sick one, who is always more or less irritable and cross. A good house also inclines a man to benevolence more than a damp, dingy and bleak one does. A man of untroubled mind (i.e., who is not in an unpleasant position) is more affable than a man of troubled mind, etc."\*\* Careful inspection of the matter shows that the benefit bestowed by art as one of the sources of pleasure, although indisputable, is nevertheless trivial compared with the benefit bestowed by other favourable relations and conditions of life. And it is not in this that the great significance of art lies. It lies in the fact that art spreads a large amount of information among the mass of people who take the slightest interest in it; that it familiarises them with the concepts worked out by science. In saying this, Chernyshevsky has in mind poetry, which he calls the most serious of the arts because, according to him, the other arts do very little in this respect. Without a doubt very few writers of fiction set themselves the aim of spreading knowledge among their readers. But since, by virtue of their education, they are superior to the majority of their readers, the latter learn a great deal from their works. Chernyshevsky is convinced that even the poorest works of fiction extend considerably the knowledge of those who read them. "By 'entertaining' the reading public", poetry promotes its intellectual development. This is why it acquires great significance in the eyes of the thinker. And this is why, contrary to

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\* Ibid., p. 33.

\*\* Ibid., p. 33.

Plato, it possesses this significance even when it shows no concern for it.

Thus, Chernyshevsky by no means seeks to destroy aesthetics. On the contrary, he bases himself on it to explain to artists the great significance of art, namely, that it spreads concepts that have been worked out by science. In other words, our author does not destroy aesthetics, but merely subjects its theory to a radical revision. After what we have heard from him about Plato's view of art, we will have no difficulty in understanding why he found it necessary and useful to refer to his "great teachers in the matter of aesthetic judgment"—Plato and Aristotle—to decide the question of who stands higher: Pushkin or Gogol. And we shall not be at all surprised by the following passage: "If the essence of art really lies in idealisation, as is claimed nowadays, if its aim is 'to create the sweet and sublime sensation of the beautiful', then there is no poet in Russian literature equal to the author of *Poltava*, *Boris Godunov*, *The Bronze Horseman*, *The Stone Guest* and all those innumerable exquisite poems. If, however, something else besides is demanded of art, then...." Chernyshevsky interrupts his sentence with a bewildered question on behalf of the reader who is biased in favour of the old aesthetic concepts: "But what else besides this can constitute the essence and significance of art?"\* We know what constitutes them in Chernyshevsky's opinion, and we ourselves can complete the interrupted sentence: if the purpose of art is not only to create the sweet and sublime sensation of the beautiful, then *The Inspector General* and *Dead Souls* are higher than *The Stone Guest* and *Poltava*, and Gogol is higher than Pushkin, and writers who excel Gogol in the consciousness of their attitude to life will be even higher than Gogol. With regard to this view Mr. Skabichevsky wrote later in his *History of Modern Russian Literature*:

"This identifying of art and science and ascribing to art the auxiliary role of illustrating scientific, philosophical and publicistic enquiry was a fatal error which had the most serious consequences. First of all, it deprived criticism of the role which is most natural to it as the judge of artistic works and which criticism performed with such brilliant success in Belinsky's day.... But then the theory of the identity of science and art and the auxiliary role of the latter in relation to the former, assimilated by young and immature minds, was bound to lead gradually to the total rejection of art that we have seen in the publicists of the *Russkoye Slovo*,<sup>115</sup> headed by Pisarev."\*\*

Having ascribed to Chernyshevsky "the theory of the identity of science and art", Mr. Skabichevsky asks in amazement: "in that

\* Ibid., p. 29.

\*\* Pp. 65-66.

case what role is so-called creative imagination to play?"\* And one is bound to agree that "*in that case*" there was indeed no place for creative imagination. But "that case" was invented by Mr. Skabichevsky himself. Chernyshevsky by no means "*identifies*" art and science. As a person familiar with Hegel's aesthetics he, like Belinsky, understands perfectly that the scientist expounds his idea with the help of logical propositions, whereas the artist embodies it in images, i.e., has recourse to "creative imagination". And Mr. Skabichevsky would not have made his mistake if he in his turn had been better acquainted with the philosophical sources from which Belinsky and Chernyshevsky drew their aesthetic views.

Let us take an example. The novel *What Is To Be Done?* devotes more than half its pages to propagating the same ideas as those expounded in the article "The Anthropological Principle in Philosophy". But in the novel these ideas are embodied in images, whereas in the article they are argued with the help of logical propositions. It is clear, therefore, that when Chernyshevsky embarked upon the novel he had to turn to his creative imagination. We know that, in the opinion of many, Chernyshevsky revealed little creative power in his novel, but this is quite another question which does not concern us here and which, incidentally, is treated most superficially by the majority of readers: Chernyshevsky himself stated that he had no artistic talent whatever, and this was too readily believed. In fact his novel is not without a certain, albeit minor, artistic merit; it has a great deal of humour and observation; and, finally, it is imbued with such an ardent passion for truth that it makes very interesting reading to this day. One would need a great deal of prejudice based on the profoundly mistaken aesthetic theories, now so widespread in our country, to shrug one's shoulders contemptuously about this novel, as many present-day, even "advanced" readers do. But, we repeat, this is quite another question. There can be no doubt that in the novel Chernyshevsky draws on his creative power, and in the article on his logic. This is sufficient to show us how grossly Mr. Skabichevsky was mistaken.

But let us quote another example. In such works as *The Death of Ivan Ilyich* and *The Master and the Worker* Tolstoy undoubtedly wished to expound views at which he had arrived in his reflections on the "meaning of life". But in expounding these views he, like Chernyshevsky in his novel, had recourse to his creative imagination, and not to this or that theoretical argument. Well, and what of it? Who would say that Tolstoy did not give rein to his creative

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\* Ibid., p. 65.



power in these works? Who would refuse to place them among the finest works of art? Mr. Skabichevsky sees identity where there is not the slightest hint of it.

Mr. Skabichevsky's idea that Chernyshevsky's alleged error deprived criticism of the role which it had played in Belinsky's day is also most unsatisfactory because of its extreme vagueness. Belinsky was indeed "a judge of artistic works". But Chernyshevsky's aesthetic theory *as such* by no means excludes judgment of them. It is true that the critics who adhered to it tended to forget the question of the artistic merit of the works which they were analysing and concentrated their attention mainly on the ideas in these works. It is also true that in Pisarev, for example, Chernyshevsky's aesthetic theory acquired a caricatured form. But this is explained by the social conditions of the day, for which Chernyshevsky was not, of course, responsible. *In itself* his aesthetic theory did not exclude interest in the aesthetic merit of artistic works. This should suffice to show how clumsy Mr. Skabichevsky was in his criticism of it.

One of the main distinguishing features of Chernyshevsky's aesthetic theory is the idea that "the beautiful" does not exhaust the content of art. He develops this idea in detail in his dissertation on "The Aesthetic Relation of Art to Reality" and returns to it several times in his *Essays on the Gogol Period of Russian Literature*.

"In every human action," he says there, "all the strivings of human nature take part, although only one of them may be primarily interested in the given action. Therefore, art, too, is produced not by an abstract striving for beauty (by the idea of the beautiful), but by the combined action of all the forces and capabilities of a living human being. And as the need for truth, love and improvement of life, for example, is much stronger in human life than the striving for beauty, art not only always serves to some degree as the expression of these needs (and not only of the idea of the beautiful), but its products (the products of human life, this must not be forgotten) are nearly always created under the overwhelming influence of the need for truth (theoretical or practical), love and improvement of life; so that, in conformity with the natural law of human activity, the striving for beauty is the servant of these and the other strong needs of human nature. This is how all artistic creations that are remarkable for their merit were produced. Strivings that are divorced from real life are impotent; therefore, even if at times the striving for beauty tried to act in an abstract way (severing its connection with the other strivings of human nature), it could not produce anything remarkable even in the artistic respect either. History knows of no works of art that were produced solely by the idea of the beautiful. Even if there are, or have been, such works, they fail to attract the atten-

tion of contemporaries and are forgotten by history as works that are too weak, even in the artistic respect."\*

This idea of Chernyshevsky's is also correct, although it suffers from being somewhat abstract. History does indeed know of no works of art that expressed only the idea of the beautiful. This, incidentally, also disproves the notion that the Pushkin period of our literature is characterised by the striving of poetry for perfection of form alone. But this is not the point. The task of scientific aesthetics is not confined to noting the fact that art always expresses *not only* the "idea" of the beautiful, but also other human strivings (for truth, love, etc.). Its task is primarily to reveal *how man's other strivings are expressed in his conception of the beautiful* and how they, themselves altering in the process of social development, also alter the "idea" of the beautiful. Thus, for example, the idea of the beautiful in the Middle Ages, embodied, say, in the image of the Madonna, was itself formed under the influence of the ideals prevalent among the clergy which, as we know, played a most important role in society at that time. In the age of the Renaissance the "idea" of the beautiful, embodied in the same image, acquires a completely different character, because it then expresses the strivings of new social strata with quite different ideals. This is now common knowledge. And Chernyshevsky undoubtedly had this fact in mind when he defined the beautiful as "*life*" in his dissertation. He wrote: "beautiful is that being in which we see life as it should be according to our conceptions." \*\*But if this is true—and it is perfectly true—what does it mean? That art, on the one hand, embodies our idea of the beautiful, and, on the other, even primarily, as Chernyshevsky maintains, expresses our strivings for truth, goodness, improvement of life, etc.? No, more often it is quite the reverse. Our concept of the beautiful is itself imbued with these strivings and itself expresses them. This is why one should not break down into separate elements something that is in fact a kind of organic whole. But Chernyshevsky, by virtue of the rationality characteristic of all "enlighteners", sometimes breaks down this organic whole into its separate component elements.\*\*\* In so doing he

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\* *Works*, Vol. II, pp. 213-14.

\*\* *Works*, Vol. X, Part 2, p. 88.

\*\*\* The 17th thesis of his "The Aesthetic Relation of Art to Reality" reads: "Reproduction of life is the general characteristic feature of art and constitutes its essence. Works of art often have another purpose, viz., to explain life; they also frequently have the purpose of pronouncing judgment on the phenomena of life" (*Works*, Vol. X, Part 2, Section I, p. 164). But the whole question is how this judgment is pronounced and in what form this explanation is given: in the form of artistic images or in the form of abstract propositions. No matter how correct this or that abstract proposition may be it bears no relation to the sphere of art. This has been well explained in our literature by Belinsky.

makes a theoretical mistake. And this theoretical mistake could and occasionally did give his criticism a one-sided appearance. If a work of art expresses certain moral or practical strivings, as well as the idea of the beautiful—and, therefore, independently of it, the critic has the right to concentrate his attention mainly on these strivings, leaving aside the question of the extent to which they have received artistic expression in the work in question. When criticism acts in this way, it necessarily assumes a *moralising* character. In our country it has often been guilty of this in the person of D. I. Pisarev, among others. By an irony of fate Mr. Skabichevsky himself has occasionally committed the same offence. This usually happens to criticism in periods of "enlightenment" which are characterised by a predominance of rationality. One must say in its defence that during such periods rationality is characteristic not only of critics but even of artists.\*

That there was occasionally too much rationality in Chernyshevsky's judgments on works of art is beyond question. And when we read his praise of Plato's strictures concerning art, we see before us an "enlightener" of a particular age, who is naturally inclined to sympathise with the attitude to art found in the representatives of all other ages of "enlightenment".\*\* In fact Chernyshevsky's assessment of Greek art at the time of Plato was not entirely fair. Although Greek art of the fourth century no longer expresses the manly civic ideal that inspired Polyclitus and Phidias, Chernyshevsky is overstating the case in saying that the artists of that time produced nothing but more or less voluptuous pictures, verses and statues.

Nor can we agree with Chernyshevsky when he rejects Kant's idea, adopted by Schiller, that art is play. For Chernyshevsky the concept of "play" was tantamount to the concept of a *simple pastime*. But this is not quite the case. In fact play becomes a simple pastime under certain conditions only. It is not only man who "plays", animals also "play". Spencer was quite right in saying that, for example, the play of beasts of prey consists of pretending to hunt and fight. This means that in the case of animals the content of their play is determined by the activity which enables them to exist. The same is seen in the case of children. As Spencer quite rightly remarked, children's games are nothing more than theatrical performances of various types

\* David said of himself: "je n'aime ni je ne sens le merveilleux: je ne puis marcher à l'aise qu'avec le secours d'un fait réel" (Delecluze, *L. David, son école et son temps*. Paris, 1895, p. 338). ["I do not like and do not feel the marvellous: I can proceed comfortably only with the help of a real fact."] (Cf. the symposium *Twenty Years*, p. 145 et seq.). This is most characteristic of a French "Enlightener" of the eighteenth century, such as David was.

\*\* The fact that Socrates' disciple, Plato, showed himself to be a typical "enlightener" in his views on art can hardly require any justification.

of adult activity. This is particularly evident in the games of young savages. In short, *play is the child of labour*, as W. Wundt so aptly put it in his *Ethics*.<sup>\*</sup> And because it is the child of labour, it is by no means always a simple pastime. It becomes this only in the case of those social classes or strata which live without working and which are therefore *idle* even in their "activity". However, even in these cases play is to some extent a natural "child of labour", because the existence in society of a class or stratum which indulges in idleness is possible only given certain production relations.

If, as Chernyshevsky says, the essential characteristic of art is the reproduction of life, art should certainly be recognised as akin to play which also reproduces life not only in the case of man, but also in the case of animals. The reproduction of life in play or in art is of great sociological importance. By reproducing their life in creations of art, people educate themselves for their social life, adjust themselves to it. The different social classes have different needs, they live different lives; therefore their aesthetic tastes are also different. Classes which indulge in idleness express the emptiness of their life in their works of art as well. Their art is in fact no more than a simple pastime; but it is a simple pastime not because it is a reproduction of life which is just like play, but merely because it reproduces an empty life. The point is not the "play", but what is the content of the play.

The view of art as *play*, supplemented by the view of play as a "child of labour", sheds a very bright light on the essence and history of art. It makes it possible for the first time to view them from a materialist standpoint. We know that, at the very beginning of his literary activity, Chernyshevsky made an attempt, which was most successful in its way, at applying Feuerbach's materialist philosophy to aesthetics. We have devoted a special work to describing this attempt.<sup>\*\*</sup> So we shall merely say here that although it was most successful in its way, that attempt was affected, just as Chernyshevsky's views on history, by the main shortcoming of Feuerbach's philosophy: insufficient elaboration of its historical or, to be more exact, dialectical aspect. And it is precisely because this aspect was not elaborated in the philosophy assimilated by him that Chernyshevsky could overlook the great importance of the concept of play for a materialist interpretation of art.

But in Chernyshevsky's aesthetics, again as in his historical views, we find many seeds of a perfectly correct understanding of the subject. See, for example, how well he explains the depen-

<sup>\*</sup> Cf. our article "More about the Art of Primitive Peoples" in the symposium *A Critique of Our Critics*, pp. 380-99. <sup>116</sup>

<sup>\*\*</sup> Cf. the article "Chernyshevsky's Aesthetic Theory" in the symposium *Twenty Years*. <sup>117</sup>

dence of the concept of beauty on the conditions of life of the different social classes. We shall quote in full the relevant passage from his dissertation which is brilliant in the full sense of the word:

"Among the common people, the 'good life', 'life as it should be', means having enough to eat, living in a good house, and having enough sleep. But at the same time the peasant's conception of life always contains the concept—work: it is impossible to live without work; indeed, life would be dull without it. As a consequence of a life of sufficiency, accompanied by hard but not exhausting work, the [peasant lad or.—*G.P.*] peasant maiden will have a very fresh complexion and rosy cheeks—the first attribute of beauty according to the conceptions of the common people. Working hard, and therefore being sturdily built, the peasant girl, if she gets enough to eat, will be buxom—this too is an essential attribute of the village beauty: rural people regard the 'ethereal' society beauty as decidedly 'plain', and are even disgusted by her, because they are accustomed to regard 'skinniness' as the result of illness or of a 'sad lot'. Work, however, does not allow one to get fat: if a peasant girl is fat, it is regarded as a kind of malady, they say she is 'flabby', and the people regard obesity as a defect. The village beauty cannot have small hands and feet, because she works hard—and these attributes of beauty are not mentioned in our songs. In short, in the descriptions of feminine beauty in our folk songs you will not find a single attribute of beauty that does not express robust health and a balanced constitution, which are always the result of a life of sufficiency and constant real, hard, but not exhausting, work. The society beauty is entirely different. For a number of generations her ancestors have lived without performing physical work. In a life of idleness, little blood flows to the limbs. With every new generation the muscles of the arms and legs grow feebler, the bones become thinner. An inevitable consequence of all this is small hands and feet—they are the symptoms of the only kind of life the upper classes of society think possible—life without physical work. If a society lady has big hands and feet, it is regarded either as a defect, or as a sign that she does not come from a good, ancient family. For the same reason, the society beauty must have small ears. Migraine, as is known, is an interesting malady, and not without good reason. As a consequence of idleness, all the blood remains in the middle organs and runs to the brain. Even without that, the nervous system is strained as a result of the general weakening of the constitution. The inevitable consequences of this are prolonged headaches and various kinds of nervous disorders. Be that as it may, even sickness is interesting, almost enviable when it is a consequence of the mode of life that we like. True, good health can never lose its value for a man, for even in

a life of sufficiency and luxury, bad health is a drawback. Hence, rosy cheeks and the freshness of good health are still attractive for society people also; but sickliness, frailty, lassitude and languor also have the virtue of beauty in their eyes as long as they seem to be the consequence of a life of idleness and luxury. Pallid cheeks, languor and sickliness have yet another significance for society people: peasants seek rest and tranquility, but people who belong to educated society, who do not suffer from material want and physical fatigue, but often suffer from ennui resulting from idleness and the absence of material cares, seek the 'thrills, excitement and passions' which lend colour, diversity and attraction to an otherwise dull and colourless society life. But thrills and ardent passions soon wear a person out. How can one fail to be charmed by a beauty's languor and paleness when they are a sign that she has lived a 'fast life'?"\*

People's concepts of beauty are expressed in works of art. The concepts of beauty in different social classes are, as we have seen, very different, occasionally even conflicting. The class which rules at a given time in society, rules in literature and the arts also. It introduces its views and concepts into them. But in a developing society different classes rule at different times. Moreover, every given class has its own history: it develops, achieves prosperity and supremacy and, finally, falls into decline. In accordance with this its literary views and its aesthetic concepts also change. Therefore we encounter different aesthetic concepts in history: the concepts and views which are dominant in one period become obsolete in another. Chernyshevsky realised that people's aesthetic concepts are determined in the last instance by their economic life. This testifies to the great perspicacity of his view. In order to give his aesthetic theory a firm materialist foundation, he should have studied in greater detail the causal connection discovered by him between aesthetics and economics and traced this connection at least through the main phases of the historical development of mankind. By so doing he would have brought about a revolution in aesthetic theory. But, firstly, the method which he employed in his research was insufficiently elaborated for such a theoretical undertaking. And, secondly, as an "enlightener" he was interested not so much in theory itself as in certain of its deductions which have a direct bearing on everyday practice. Therefore, after taking an extremely penetrating look at the question of the relationship of consciousness to being in the field of aesthetics, he immediately turns away from this theoretical question and hastens to give his reader some sensible, practical advice. He says:

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\* *Works*, Vol. X, Part 2, Section I, pp. 89-90.

*"We like a fresh and heightened colour,  
The sign of youthful vigour;  
But far more than it we prefer  
A melancholy pallor."*

"But while a liking for pale, sickly beauty is a sign of artificially corrupted taste, every truly educated man feels that true life is the life of the heart and mind. It leaves its impress on the expression of the face, most clearly in the eyes, and therefore, facial expression, of which little mention is made in folk songs, acquires enormous significance in the conception of beauty that prevails among educated people; and it often happens that a person looks beautiful to us only because he has beautiful, expressive eyes!"\*

This is also true. But this true statement concerns not so much aesthetics as it *is*, depending on the economic position of the different classes, as aesthetics as it *should be* in the case of "educated people". Concern for what *should be* predominates in Chernyshevsky's dissertation over theoretical interest in why what *is* is sometimes quite different from what *should be*. This explains the apparently strange fact that in the dissertation of this materialist one finds fewer truly materialist observations on the history of art than, for example, in the *Aesthetics* of the absolute idealist Hegel.\*\*

But let us return to the article on Aristotle's *Poetics*. It constitutes an addition, as it were, to Chernyshevsky's study on "the aesthetic relation of art to reality". In his opinion, Aristotle is less exalted in his demands on art than Plato; his concepts of the significance of music and poetry are not as edifying as Plato's, and are even—as we explained above in passing, when discussing Chernyshevsky's attitude to Hegelian dialectics—somewhat petty. Our author does not agree with Aristotle when the latter explains the origin of art by man's striving to imitate. He approves very much of Aristotle's view on the relationship between poetry and philosophy, however. He says: "In Aristotle's opinion, poetry, which depicts human life from the general point of view, presenting not its casual and insignificant details, but what is essential and characteristic in life, has very much philosophical merit. He thinks that, in this respect, it is even far superior to history, which must indiscriminately describe the important and unimportant, the essential and characteristic, as well as casual facts which have no intrinsic importance. Poetry is also far superior to history

\* Ibid., p. 90.

\*\* Cf. Hegel's remarks on the history of Dutch painting, with which any modern dialectical materialist can agree almost unreservedly (*Aesthetik*, 1-er Band, S. 217, 248; B. II, S. 217-23). His *Aesthetics* contain many such remarks here and there.

because it presents everything in its inner connection, whereas history presents everything without any inner connection; it relates in chronological order diverse facts that have nothing in common with one another."\*

As we know, Lessing too approved of this view of Aristotle's and for the very same reason: it provided the theoretical possibility of imposing upon poetry the requirement so dear to both "enlighteners" that it should "explain life" or—to put it more precisely—pronounce "judgment" on life. In fact, of course, Aristotle's view could be explained in the purely theoretical sense which Hegel ascribed to it in his *Aesthetics* and which we most often find in Belinsky's reflections on the subject. But Chernyshevsky, like Lessing, interprets it in the practical way beloved by "enlighteners".\*\*

As an "enlightener" concerned mainly with practical deductions and therefore not very inclined to make a thorough investigation of the theoretical basis of such deductions, Chernyshevsky is by no means always historically fair to the aesthetic theories that he refutes.

Chernyshevsky, like Lessing, did not like the "theoreticians of the pseudo-classical school" for reasons which are perfectly obvious—and, in the case of Lessing, well explained by F. Mehring in his famous book *Lessings-Legende*—but the examination of which would cause us to digress too far here. He occasionally accuses these theoreticians of crimes they have never actually committed, which he himself could have seen easily by paying a little more attention to the historical aspect of the aesthetic questions that occupied him. Here is a striking example. In Plato and Aristotle the fine arts are called the *imitative* arts. In this connection Chernyshevsky finds it necessary to stress that the "*imitation*" about which these philosophers speak has very little in common with the "*imitation of nature*" which the pseudo-classical school saw as the essence of art. "Does Plato, and particularly Aristotle, the teacher of all the Batteuxes, Boileaus and Horaces," he says, "not regard art as the imitation of *nature*, the term we are all accustomed to use when speaking of the imitation theory? No, both Plato and Aristotle regard not nature, but *human* life as the true content of art, and of poetry in particular. To them belongs the great honour of thinking about the main content of art that which since their time has been expressed by Lessing alone and which all their followers could not understand. In

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\* *Works*, Vol. I, pp. 36-37.

\*\* Here it may perhaps be relevant to recall the following reservation by Chernyshevsky with regard to history: "But Aristotle's opinion of history requires explanation. It is applicable only to that form of history that was known in his day—it was not history in the proper sense, but the writing of chronicles" (*Works*, Vol. I, p. 37).



Aristotle's *Poetics* there is not a word about nature: he speaks of people, of their actions, of what happens to people, as the things which poetry imitates. The word 'nature' could have been adopted in poetics only in the heyday of flabby and false descriptive poetry ... and didactic poetry which is inseparable from it—kinds which Aristotle banished from poetry. The imitation of *nature* is alien to true poetry, the chief subject of which is—man. 'Nature' comes to the forefront only in landscape painting, and the phrase 'imitating *nature*' was first heard from the lips of the painter."\*

Chernyshevsky goes on to explain, quoting Pliny, the circumstances in which this phrase was first uttered: when Lysippus asked the painter Eupompus which of the great artists one should imitate, the latter replied that it was not artists but nature itself that should be imitated. From these words our author rightly concludes that living reality in general and not nature in the narrow sense of the word should serve as the artist's model. But the fact is that the words "imitating nature" were interpreted in the same sense by the "theoreticians of the pseudo-classical school" also. As evidence of this we shall quote Boileau whom Chernyshevsky mentions as one of the writers who allegedly forgot about man. In Book Three of his *Art poétique* Boileau gives the following advice to writers:

*Que la nature donc soit votre étude unique,  
Auteurs, qui prétendez aux honneurs du comique.  
Quiconque voit bien l'homme, et, d'un esprit profond,  
De tant de cœurs cachés a pénétré le fond;  
Qui sait bien ce que c'est qu'un prodigue, un avaro,  
Un honnête homme, un fat, un jaloux, un bizarre,  
Sur une scène heureuse il peut les étaler,  
Et les faire à nos yeux vivre, agir et parler.  
Présentez-en partout les images naïves;  
Que chacun y soit peint des couleurs les plus vives.  
La nature, féconde en bizarres portraits,  
Dans chaque âme est marquée à de différents traits,  
Un geste la découvre, un rien la fait paraître;  
Mais tout esprit n'a pas des yeux pour la connaître.\*\**

\* *Works*, Vol. I, pp. 38-39.

\*\* [You, then, that would the comic laurels wear,  
To study nature be your only care.  
Whoe'er knows man, and by a curious art  
Discerns the hidden secrets of the heart;  
He who observes, and naturally can paint  
The jealous fool, the fawning sycophant,  
A sober wit, an enterprising ass,  
A humorous Otter, or a Hudibras,—  
May safely in those noble lusts engage,  
And make them act and speak upon the stage.

It is perfectly clear that by "nature" Boileau means man here. And this is equally clear from the following passage:

*Aux dépens du bon sens gardez de plaisanter:  
Jamais de la nature il ne faut s'écarter.  
Contemplez de quel air un père dans Térence  
Vient d'un fils amoureux gourmander l'imprudence;  
De quel air cet amant écoute ses leçons,  
Et court chez sa maîtresse oublier ses chansons.  
Ce n'est pas un portrait, une image semblable,  
C'est un amant, un fils, un père véritable.\**

When Boileau said that on no account should one shun nature, he obviously meant that *human* nature should be portrayed as faithfully as possible. Boileau quotes Terence as an example; but Terence is worthy of imitation, in his opinion, as an artist who brilliantly reproduced human nature: the father, the son, the lover, etc. The seventeenth century could not have preferred the portrayal of nature to that of human life. It was far too interested in the latter. Human life claimed nearly all its attention, and even the landscape painting of this century put nature into the background. The attention of the landscape painter in France did not turn from man to nature until the end of the 1820s; and this change meant in fact not that artists began to be more interested in nature than in man, but that they were now interested in other aspects of man's spiritual life for which they

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Strive to be natural in all you write,  
And paint with colours that may please the sight.  
Nature in various figures does abound,  
And in each mind are different humors found;  
A glance, a touch, discovers to the wise,  
But every man has not discerning eyes.]

- \* [Your action still should reason's rules obey...  
The passions must to nature be confined...  
Observe how Térence does his evil shun.  
A careful father chides his amorous son;  
Then see that son whom no advice can move,  
Forget those orders, and pursue his love!  
'Tis not a well-drawn picture we discover,  
'Tis a true son, a father, and a lover.

Albert S. Cook, *The Art of Poetry.  
The Poetical Treatises of Horace,  
Vida, and Boileau*, Boston, USA, 1892,  
pp. 205, 207-08.]

had had little interest before.\* But, we repeat, for Chernyshevsky, as an "enlightener", these historical details were of no particular importance. The important thing for him was the deduction, of enormous practical significance in his eyes, that "it would be more correct to call art the reproduction of reality (to use a modern term for the word 'imitation', which does not satisfactorily convey the meaning of the Greek *mimêsis*) than to think that art realises in its works our idea of perfect beauty, which allegedly does not exist in reality".\*\* Developing this idea, Chernyshevsky argues that it is wrong to think that by recognising the reproduction of human life as the supreme principle of art we compel art to make crude and vulgar copies of reality and to renounce all idealisation. Chernyshevsky recognises idealisation, but he gives his own definition to this concept. Idealisation that consists in the so-called ennobling of the objects and characters depicted is tantamount to artificiality, pomposity and hypocrisy: "the only idealisation that is needed is the exclusion from poetical works of details, no matter of what kind, that are not essential for the purpose of obtaining a full picture". And this is, of course, perfectly right.

Leaving aside, as already analysed by us elsewhere, the other aesthetic views expressed by Chernyshevsky on Aristotle's *Poetics* and repeated by him in his dissertation, we shall examine one further point only. Chernyshevsky mentions that Aristotle considered writers of tragedy superior to Homer and believed that the latter's poems were far less artistic in form than, the tragedies of Sophocles and Euripides. Our author agrees entirely with the Greek philosopher's view and, for his part, considers it necessary to supplement it with a single remark: he finds that the tragedies of Sophocles and Euripides are incomparably more artistic than Homer's poems not only in form, but also in content. And he asks whether it is not time for us to follow Aristotle's example and look at Shakespeare without false obsequiousness. He believes that it was natural for Lessing to place the great English dramatist above all the poets who had existed on earth; but today, when there is no longer any need to protest against overzealous imitation of French pseudo-classical writers and when we have Lessing, Goethe, Schiller and Byron, a critical attitude towards Shakespeare is perfectly permissible. "Does not Goethe think that *Hamlet* needs revision? And perhaps Schiller did not reveal indiscriminate taste in revising Racine's *Phèdre* as well as Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. We are impartial towards the distant

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\* See the articles on the French landscape in the collection *Histoire du paysage en France*, Paris, 1908; ibidem, L. Rosenthal's lectures: "Le paysage au temps du romantisme", and Charles Saunier's article "Jean-François Millet". Cf. also Fromentin: *Les maîtres d'autrefois. Belgique—Hollande*, 8-e édit., Paris, 1896, p. 271 et seq.

\*\* *Works*, Vol. 1, p. 39.

past; why, then, should we hesitate so long in recognising the recent past as an age of the higher development of poetry than the preceding one? Does not its development keep pace with the development of education and of life?"\*

It goes without saying that one can and should adopt a critical attitude to Shakespeare, just as one can and should adopt the same attitude to Goethe and Tolstoy, for example, or Hegel and Spinoza. But whether one can place Lessing and Schiller or Byron above Shakespeare is another question. We are not able to examine it here, but we shall nevertheless permit ourselves to say that as a dramatist Shakespeare is far superior to the writers mentioned by Chernyshevsky. Impartiality is, of course, essential in all literary judgments; but it does not oblige us to accept the idea that the successes of poetry always keep pace with the successes of life and education. This is far from being the case. As artists Corneille and Racine are incomparably superior to Voltaire, yet French education and French life in the eighteenth century were far in advance of French education and life in the preceding century. Or—to take an example which would have seemed more convincing to Chernyshevsky as a firm opponent of the French pseudo-classical school—is it not obvious that in Shakespeare's age the English theatre was incomparably better than in the eighteenth century? Yet English education and life made great progress in the interval between these two periods. The "enlighteners" of all countries were most inclined to think that the successes of enlightenment ("education") were always directly proportional to the successes of all other aspects of the intellectual and social life of nations. This is not the case. In fact the historical movement of mankind is a process in which the successes of one aspect not only do not presuppose the proportional successes of all the other aspects, but sometimes actually cause the backwardness or even the decline of some of them. Thus, for example, the colossal development of West-European economic life, which determined the mutual relation between the class of producers and the class of appropriators of social wealth, led in the second half of the nineteenth century to the spiritual decline of the bourgeoisie and of all the arts and sciences in which the moral concepts and social aspirations of this class are expressed. In the France of the late eighteenth century the bourgeoisie was still a class full of intellectual and moral energy; but this fact did not prevent the poetry created by it at that time from deteriorating by comparison with what it was earlier when social life was less developed. Poetry, in general, does not get along well with rationality, and rationality is very often an inevitable consequence and reliable index of the successes of education. But considerations of this kind were quite alien to Chernyshevsky, as a typical "enlightener".

\* *Ibid.*, p. 43.

*Chapter Two.***Belinsky, Chernyshevsky and Pisarev**

We have said elsewhere that if Belinsky was the *father* of our "enlighteners", Chernyshevsky is *their greatest representative*.<sup>\*</sup> To make this clear, we must first remind the reader in what sense we regard Belinsky as the father of our "enlighteners".

During the period of his famous "reconciliation with reality" he set himself the task of understanding it as the product of a certain course of historical development. He held the view at that time that an ideal which was not justified by the course of development of "reality", i.e., which was divorced from reality, was a kind of subjective whim not worthy of either attention or interest. His "reconciliation with reality" merely meant contempt for such an ideal. Subsequently, after he had condemned his article on the Battle of Borodino as unworthy of an honest writer, he continued to remain faithful to the spirit of Hegel's philosophy and was displeased not with the basic propositions in this article, but with its deductions. "The idea which I attempted to develop in the article on Glinka's book *Essays on the Battle of Borodino*," he wrote, "is basically correct." But he now believed that he had not made proper use of this correct basis. "I should also have developed the idea of negation as an historical right, the first, sacred one without which mankind would have turned into a stagnant and stinking morass." Hegel, insofar as he remained true to his dialectics, recognised fully "the historical right of negation". This is very clear from his lectures on the history of philosophy, in which he speaks of negators such as Socrates with such firm approval. But in Hegel—again insofar as he did not betray his dialectical method—the negation of any given "reality" is the logical product of the latter's own dialectical development, i.e., the development of the internal contradictions inherent in this reality. In order to substantiate the "idea of negation" in Russia, it was necessary to discover and show the way in which the historical development of the social relations which constituted the given Russian "reality" should by its own inner logic lead with time to the negation of the "reality" in question, i.e., to its replacement by a new "reality" which corresponded more or less to the ideals of advanced personalities. The terrible backwardness of our social life at that time made it impossible for Belinsky to solve this extremely important theoretical task. And since he could not, with his moral constitution, live in peace with "reality", since his peace with it was merely a truce, he was forced to try and substantiate his "idea of nega-

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\* *Twenty Years*, 3rd edition, p. 260.

tion" in another, quite un-dialectical way: he sought to deduce it from the abstract concept of the *human personality* which he thought it necessary to free "from the foul fetters of irrational reality, the opinion of the rabble, and the tradition of barbaric times". But insofar as he sought support in this abstract concept, he turned from a *dialectician* into an "enlightener".

As we see in every period of "enlightenment" with which we are familiar, in their criticism of the relations of their day enlighteners usually proceeded from this or that *abstract principle*.

From the socio-political point of view this new trend in Belinsky's thought—his search for support in the abstract concept of the personality—led him to *utopian socialism*, and from the point of view of literature to the rehabilitation of Schiller, whom he now declared to be mankind's noble advocate. But he had not passed through the Hegel school in vain: he retained forever an aversion for "far-fetched idealism that stands on stilts and waves a cardboard sword like a painted actor". Whereas in his youth, in the early period of his enthusiasm for Schiller, Belinsky admired his *Robbers*, he now had nothing but contempt for writers who following the example of Marlinsky "set about portraying Karl Moors in a Circassian felt cloak or Lears and Childe Harolds in civil servant uniform". By the beginning of 1844, in the article "*Russian Literature in 1843*", he notes with satisfaction that now "both large and small talents, both mediocrities and the completely untalented—all are striving to portray real, not imaginary people, but since real people live on earth and in society, and not in the air, not in the clouds, where only phantoms live, the writers of our day are naturally portraying society as well as people. Society is also something real, and not imaginary, therefore its essence is made up not only of costumes and hair-styles, but also of customs, habits, concepts, relations, etc."\* In the following years of his life Belinsky, whose intellectual development was proceeding in the same direction as that of West-European philosophical thought, turned from *Hegel* to *Feuerbach*. This is particularly obvious in his article "*A Look at Russian Literature in 1846*", where he expounds some of the basic propositions of Feuerbach's philosophy. In the same article he says in full accordance with his new philosophical convictions: "If we were asked what is the distinguishing feature of contemporary Russian literature, we would answer: its increasingly close contact with life, with reality, its gradual approach to maturity and manhood."\*\* In the literary review of the following year, written just before his death, he defines the state and tasks of our literature as follows:

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\* V. G. Belinsky, *Works*, Moscow, 1880, Part 8, p. 63.

\*\* Ibid., pp. 9-10.

"Our literature was the fruit of conscious thought; it emerged as an innovation, it began as imitation. Yet it did not stop there, but strove constantly for originality, national character, from being rhetorical it strove to become *natural*. It is this striving, marked by considerable and constant successes, that constitutes the meaning and spirit of our literature's history. And we would say, without a moment's hesitation, that in no other Russian writer has this striving been so successful as in Gogol. This could happen only through art turning exclusively to reality, apart from all ideals. For this it was necessary to concentrate attention fully on the crowd, the masses, to portray ordinary people and not only pleasant exceptions to the general rule, which always tempt poets to idealise and which bear an alien imprint. This is Gogol's great service.... By this he changed the view of art itself completely. The old and decrepit definition of poetry as 'embellished nature' can be applied, by stretching a point, to the works of all Russian poets; but it is impossible to apply it to the works of Gogol. They require a different interpretation of art—art as the reproduction of reality in all its truth. Here it is a matter of *types*, and here the *ideal* is understood not as embellishment (that is, falsehood), but as the relations with one another in which the author places the types created by him, in keeping with the idea which he wishes to develop in his work."\*

Chernyshevsky agreed without reservation with everything that Belinsky said in this passage, and these ideas of Belinsky's provided the basis for his views on the general tasks of Russian literature and its state in the various periods of its development. The author of the *Essays on the Gogol Period of Russian Literature* was perfectly entitled to regard himself as the continuer of *Belinsky's cause*. When Turgenev and other educated "people of the forties" asserted that the preaching of Chernyshevsky and those who shared his views was a betrayal of the behests of Belinsky's criticism, they overlooked the fact that even the "impetuous Vissarion" in the latter period of his life often expressed himself in the spirit of this preaching. Their opinion was not totally wrong, however. They were right in the sense that Chernyshevsky and those who shared his views occasionally made deductions from Belinsky's "enlightened" ideas which for all their logical correctness would hardly have appealed to Belinsky who throughout his life retained in his views a great deal of what Pisarev christened later "the shell of Hegelianism".

What exactly is the "reality" of which Belinsky speaks in the passages quoted by us from his annual reviews of Russian literature? Does this concept of it coincide with the concept of the "reality" with which he had become "reconciled"?

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\* Belinsky, *Works*, *ibid.*, pp. 344-45.

Noting with satisfaction that our journals were talking of reality more than anything else, Belinsky remarked: "The concept of reality is an entirely new one."\* Chernyshevsky quotes this remark in Chapter Seven of his *Essays on the Gogol Period* and finds it perfectly correct. He says that the concept of reality "was defined and entered science quite recently, namely, since the time when the obscure allusions of transcendental philosophy, which recognised truth only in concrete realisation, were explained by modern thinkers".\*\* And he considers it necessary to set forth this new and simple, but extremely fruitful view of reality in detail.

"There were times," he says, "when the dreams of the imagination were placed far higher than that which life represents, and when the power of the imagination was considered boundless. But modern thinkers examined this question more carefully and arrived at results that are the direct opposite of earlier opinions which have shown themselves to be quite incapable of withstanding criticism. The power of our imagination is extremely limited, and its creations are very pale and weak by comparison with reality. The most vivid imagination is overwhelmed by the idea of the millions of miles that separate the earth from the sun, of the incredible speed of light and electricity; the most ideal figures of Raphael were portraits of real people; the most hideous creations of mythology and popular superstition were far more similar to the animals around us than the monsters discovered by naturalists; it has been proved by history and careful observation of modern life that real people, who are by no means inveterate scoundrels or virtuous angels, commit crimes which are far more terrible and perform feats which are far more noble than anything that has been invented by poets. The imagination had to submit to reality; and moreover: it was forced to realise that its imaginary creations were only copies of the phenomena of reality."\*\*\*

This is exactly the same thing that he says in his dissertation. He goes on to explain that the phenomena of reality are extremely diverse. It contains much that suits man's requirements and much that conflicts with them.

Formerly, when people scorned reality they thought it was very easy to refashion it according to their fantastic dreams. Then they saw that this was not so. Man is very weak. All his strength depends on knowledge of real life and on the ability to make use of the laws of nature for his own ends. Acting in conformity with these laws and with the characteristics of his own nature, man can gradually change reality and adapt it to his strivings. Otherwise he achieves nothing. Yet not all man's

\* Ibid., p. 33.

\*\* N. G. Chernyshevsky, *Works*, Vol. II, p. 205.

\*\*\* Ibid., p. 205.



strivings conform to the laws of nature. Some of them violate these laws. And man has in fact no need to realise such strivings: would bring him nothing but dissatisfaction and suffering. Everything that contravenes the laws of nature, in general, and human nature, in particular, is harmful and painful for man. Therefore morally healthy people have no strivings that contravene these laws. Such strivings are cherished only by people who submit to idle fantasies. "Lasting enjoyment is afforded to man by reality alone; only desires based on reality are of serious importance; success may be expected only from hopes evoked by reality, and only from those deeds which are accomplished with the help of the forces and circumstances offered by reality."\*

Such was the new concept of "reality". Chernyshevsky had Feuerbach in mind when he said that it had been formed by modern thinkers from the obscure allusions of transcendental philosophy. And he expounded Feuerbach's concept of reality quite correctly. Feuerbach said that sensuousness or reality is identical with truth, i.e., that the object in its true sense is given only by sensation. Speculative philosophy supposed that conceptions of objects based only on sense experience do not correspond to the real nature of the objects and must be verified with the aid of pure thought, i.e., thought not based on sense experience. Feuerbach decisively rejected this idealistic view. He asserted that conceptions of objects based on our sense experience fully correspond to the nature of these objects. The only trouble is that our imagination frequently distorts these conceptions, which, therefore, come into contradiction with our sense experience. Philosophy should drive out from our conceptions the fantastic element that distorts them; it should bring them into accord with sense experience. It must return mankind to a contemplation of real objects undistorted by fancy, such as prevailed in ancient Greece. And insofar as mankind passes to such contemplation, it returns to itself, because people who submit to figments of the imagination can themselves be only imaginary and not real beings. In the words of Feuerbach, the essence of man is sensuousness, i.e., reality, and not imagination or abstraction. The task of philosophy and science in general is to restore reality to its rightful place. But if that is so, it follows of itself that the tasks of aesthetics as a branch of science are also to restore reality to its rightful place and combat the imaginary element in man's notions. It was on this conclusion from Feuerbach's philosophy that Chernyshevsky's aesthetic views were based; it constituted the main idea of his dissertation. And there is no doubt that Belinsky had the same conclusion in mind when, in his last

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\* Ibid., p. 206.

but one annual review of literature, he described the concept of "reality" as a new one.

One must do full justice to both Belinsky and Chernyshevsky: the conclusion which they drew from Feuerbach's philosophy was perfectly correct. But how did it relate to the "obscure allusions of transcendental philosophy"?

In Hegel only the "rational" was recognised as "real". In Feuerbach only the "real" is "rational". At first glance it would seem that both thinkers are saying the same thing, but then it is strange that Chernyshevsky sees merely an obscure allusion in Hegel's idea which he finds perfectly clear when he encounters it in Feuerbach. But the point is as follows.

Hegel's "reason" is nothing other than the law of objective development. Hegel regards this law through the prism of idealism. This prism occasionally distorts the true correlation of phenomena considerably—turns it upside-down, to use Marx's expression; but for all this Hegel regarded as the criterion of the rationality of subjective strivings the correspondence of these strivings to the logical course of the objective development of society. Herein lies the great strength of his philosophy, which Belinsky sensed instinctively when he turned away from the "abstract ideal" to "rational reality". When Feuerbach demanded from the investigator an attentive attitude to sensuousness freed from fantastic inventions, he was merely translating into the language of materialism Hegel's essentially correct and extremely profound idea. And when this profound idea of Hegel's, translated by Feuerbach into the language of materialism, was later properly elaborated by Marx, it became the basis of the materialist explanation of history. But in Feuerbach himself and his immediate followers, including Belinsky and Chernyshevsky, the translation<sup>1</sup> of this idea of Hegel's into the language of materialism was very abbreviated; in them this idea was not elaborated. And in its unelaborated form it became, in spite of its materialist essence, the source of an idealist attitude to phenomena. This took place because the demand which Feuerbach made on investigators had a dual nature: firstly, it ordered them to adopt an attentive attitude to reality, and, secondly, for the sake of this very attentive attitude, it strongly recommended them to fight energetically against fantastic inventions. Suppose that an investigator by virtue of the given circumstances of time and place concentrates his attention mainly on fighting fantastic inventions, and you have not a theoretician trying to find the materialist basis of phenomena, but an "enlightener" carrying on a war against obsolete prejudices in the name of his subjective reason. The circumstances of time and place necessary for this were present in Russia both at the time when Belinsky, after failing to substantiate his idea of negation, was compelled to content himself with struggling

against reality in the name of the abstract rights of the individual, and—even more so—at the time when Chernyshevsky's world outlook was developing. Therefore Belinsky in the final period of his literary activity, and Chernyshevsky from its very beginning, had publicistic and to a large extent also literary views which were imbued with the idealism characteristic of "enlighteners". And in this sense Belinsky was perfectly right when he called his "concept of reality" a new one in the review of literature quoted above. It really was new by comparison with what the self-same Belinsky understood by reality when he wrote his article on the Battle of Borodino. Then this word meant for him the sum total of the social relations that existed in Russia, and he felt obliged to pay homage to these relations for the simple reason that he had not been able to discover the inner contradictions inherent in them. Now for Belinsky, and after him for Chernyshevsky also, the concept of reality no longer coincided with the concept of the sum total of what exists: we have already heard from Chernyshevsky that what exists is frequently the product of an imagination that is wrongly directed and out of touch with reality. Thus, in their case, insofar as they were "enlighteners", attention to reality meant primarily attention to what can and should exist when people free themselves from fantastic inventions and begin to obey the laws of their own nature. And if, notwithstanding this, both Belinsky and Chernyshevsky persistently recommend fiction to give an accurate portrayal of that which exists, they do so in the firm conviction that the more accurately fiction portrays the mutual relations between people, the more quickly people will see the abnormality of these relations and the more quickly they will be able to improve them in accordance with the requirements of their own nature, i. e., to be more precise, in accordance with the instructions of the subjective reason of "enlighteners". It is, therefore, not surprising that both Chernyshevsky and Belinsky considered that the prime task of literary criticism should be to explain to people what was abnormal in their mutual relations portrayed by fiction. Elsewhere in a description of Belinsky's views in the latter period of his literary activity we stressed that in fact he became an "enlightener" only when he abandoned the viewpoint of dialectics, which did not cease to attract him to the end of his life. In the same place we pointed out how successfully Belinsky sometimes provided a dialectical explanation of literary phenomena.\* We draw attention to this again here because we do not wish a one-sided interpretation to be given to what we have said about Belinsky. We repeat: Belinsky had a very strong dialectical streak, stronger

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\* Cf. the end of our article "The Literary Views of V. G. Belinsky" in the symposium *Twenty Years*.

than even Feuerbach, and even in the latter period of his activity he by no means always reasoned like an "enlightener". But when he went over to the viewpoint of an "enlightener", he expressed with his customary talent the views which were later developed consistently by our criticism of the sixties, i.e., mainly by Chernyshevsky and Dobrolyubov. This is why we called him the father of our "enlighteners".

In describing and developing his "new" concept of reality, Belinsky expressed himself as an "enlightener"; all that remained for Chernyshevsky was to proceed further in the same direction. In order to show how consistently Chernyshevsky adhered to this course and how faithful he was to the "enlightened" behest of his great predecessor, we shall quote his view of Schiller, which we have taken from his bibliographical note on Schiller's works in a translation by Russian poets (*Sovremennik*, 1857, No. 1).

He says there: "His poetry will never die—this is no Southey or Herbel. People who pride themselves on being positive, whereas in fact they have only hard hearts, on their knowledge of life, whereas they have acquired only knowledge of petty intrigues, occasionally speak condescendingly of Schiller as an idealist and dreamer, and occasionally even dare to suggest that he possessed more sentimentality than talent. All this may be right in relation to some of the poets who are considered in our country to belong to the same trend as Schiller, but not in relation to Schiller himself. He himself describes the nature of his poetry in the *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man*\*, expounding his ideas on the essential significance of poetry in general. This work was written in 1795, in the period of the French wars on the outcome of which depended not only the political independence or subjection of Germany, but also the solution of questions concerning the internal life of the German peoples. In it Schiller sought to show that the way to the solution of social questions was through aesthetic activity. In his opinion, the moral rebirth of man was essential in order to change existing relations for the better: their organisation could be improved only when the human heart was ennobled. Aesthetic activity was to be the means for such a rebirth. It was to confer a noble and firm mood on intellectual life. The rigorous principles of spiritual nobility frighten people when they are expounded by strict science. Art instils in man imperceptibly concepts the value of which he refuses to appreciate when they appear to him without poetic attire. Poetry brings a better reality by its ideals: by instilling noble impulses in the youth, it prepares him for noble practical activity.

"Such is Schiller's poetry indeed. It is by no means sentimentalism, or the play of dreaming fantasy: the pathos of this poetry

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\* [*Briefe über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen.*]

is its ardent sympathy for all that is noble and strong in man.”\*

Poetry is to be the means of people's moral rebirth. Poetic attire is necessary in order to instil in people concepts the value of which they would not be able to appreciate if they saw them without poetic attire. This is Chernyshevsky's main idea. He evaluates Schiller from this point of view. Schiller is dear to him as a man who strove for people's moral education by means of artistic works. The most interesting words in the passage quoted are "Poetry brings a better reality by its ideals". Here the new concept of reality characteristic of the enlighteners is expressed with particular clarity. A better reality is created by an ideal. This view is diametrically opposed to the one that ideals influence reality only when they express the objective tendencies of its development. Poetry instils noble impulses in youths and thereby prepares them for noble activity. Criticism in its turn helps poetry to do this and thereby becomes what was sometimes called publicistic criticism in our country.

Everyone knows that the criticism of the sixties, the criticism of Dobrolyubov, for example, often developed into publicistics. Hence, in speaking of Chernyshevsky, we shall not so much {present proofs of this thought as illustrations of it. In 1858 Chernyshevsky's article "The Russian at a Rendezvous. Reflections on Turgenev's Story *Asya*" appeared in the review section of the *Athenaeum*, No. 3. This article is one of the most brilliant examples of publicistic criticism. Very little, almost nothing, is said in the article about the story itself, which Chernyshevsky calls "practically the only good new story". The author merely draws attention to the scene in which the hero of the story makes his declaration of love to Asya, and, in connection with this scene, he indulges in "reflections". The reader will recall, of course, that at the critical moment Turgenev's hero turned coward and went back on his word. It is this circumstance that caused Chernyshevsky to "reflect". He notes that indecision and cowardice are the distinctive features not only of this hero, but of most of the heroes of our best literary works. He recalls Rudin, Beltov, and the tutor of Nekrasov's Sasha,<sup>118</sup> and sees the same features in all of them. He does not blame the authors of the novels on this account since they were only recording what is encountered at every turn in real life. There is no manliness in Russian people, therefore the characters in the novels have none either. And Russian people have no manliness because they are not in the habit of taking part in public affairs. "When we go into society, we see around us people in uniforms and civilian morning or evening dress; these people are five and a half or six feet tall, and sometimes even more; they grow or shave the hair on their cheeks, above

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\* *Works*, Vol. III, p. 5.

their upper lip and on their chin; and we imagine we are looking at men. This is a total error, an optical illusion, an hallucination, nothing more. Without acquiring the habit of independent participation in civil affairs, without acquiring the feelings of a citizen, the male child grows up and becomes middle-aged, and then an elderly being of the masculine gender, but he does not become a man or, at any rate, not a man of noble character.”\* Among humane, educated people, the absence of noble manliness strikes one still more than among ignorant people, because the humane, educated man likes to talk about important matters. He talks with enthusiasm and eloquence, but only until it becomes a matter of passing from words to deeds. “So long as there is no question of action, but merely the need to fill up empty hours, an empty mind, or an empty heart, with talk and dreams, the hero is very glib; but once it is a matter of expressing his feelings plainly and precisely,† the majority of the heroes immediately begin to waver and feel tongue-tied. A few, the most courageous, somehow contrive to muster their forces and stammer something that provides a vague idea of their thoughts. But just attempt to take their wishes at face value and say to them: ‘You want so-and-so; we’re very glad; begin to do something about it and you’ll have our support’—if such a remark is made one half of the very brave heroes faints, the other begins to reproach you gruffly for putting them in an awkward position; they begin to say that they did not expect such proposals from you, that they are quite at a loss and cannot think properly because it is not possible to do so at a moment’s notice and, moreover, that they are honest people, and not only honest but very mild, and they do not want to cause you any unpleasantness, and that, in general, it is not possible, really, to trouble oneself about all that is said merely from having nothing to do, and that it is best not to undertake anything at all, because everything involves trouble and inconvenience, and at present no good can come of it, because, as already said, they never for a moment expected, or anticipated, and so on and so forth.”\*\*

One can say that the portrait is painted with a master’s hand. However, the master was not a literary critic, but a publicist. And the following “reflections” of our author on Turgenyev’s story also belong to a publicist. The event portrayed by Turgenyev makes him remember that everything depends entirely on the circumstances and that what we see as a person’s guilt is in fact his misfortune, which requires help in eliminating the circumstances that gave rise to it. “What is needed is not punishment of the individual, but changing of the conditions of

\* *Works*, Vol. I, pp. 97-98.

\*\* *Ibid.*, pp. 90-91.

life for a whole estate." The hero of the story *Asya* is not only not a fool, but an intelligent man who has experienced and seen a great deal in life. If he, nevertheless, behaves very stupidly, this is the fault of two circumstances, one of which conditions the other: "He was not accustomed to understand anything great and vital, because his life was too petty and callous, all the relations and affairs to which he was accustomed were petty and callous. That is the first. The second is that he quails, retreats weakly before anything that demands bold decision and noble risk, again because life has accustomed him to dreary pettiness in all things."\* In order to change human character it is essential to change the conditions under the influence of which it is formed. This correct idea, which occupied such an important place in the teaching of the French Enlighteners of the eighteenth century, and later of the utopian socialists of the nineteenth, logically invites the question: what will be the nature and the origin of the causes which are to change for the better the circumstances that determine human character? Marx answered this question by pointing to the economic development of society and in so doing produced a revolution in social science. Chernyshevsky who, like all utopian socialists, does not usually concern himself with this question, nevertheless comes very close to it in the article "The Russian at a Rendezvous". Indeed, if the vast majority of our "humane" and "educated" people are exactly like the hero of Turgenev's story; if they all behave stupidly and indecisively, because they are not capable of intelligent and decisive action, it would seem to follow that it is both pointless and improvident to summon them to such action: if one is to take an interest in them, the conditions on which their type of character depends must be changed for the better. Chernyshevsky himself feels that this is so; but he does not want to acknowledge that it cannot be otherwise. He says, "We still do not wish to say to ourselves: at the present time they are not capable of understanding their position; not capable of acting sensibly and yet generously—only their children and grandchildren, brought up with different concepts and habits, will be able to act like honest, sensible citizens ... no, we still want to assume that they are capable of understanding what is happening around them and to them..."\*\*

What does this mean? Why does Chernyshevsky not want to acknowledge a conclusion the theoretical correctness of which he did not dispute? This also depended on the "circumstances", that is, on the combination of "circumstances" that characterised the years immediately preceding the abolition of serfdom in our country.

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\* Ibid., p. 97.

\*\* Ibid., pp. 100-01.

In the hero of *Asya* Chernyshevsky saw a typical representative of the educated section of our nobility. He did not have, and indeed could not have had, any estate prejudice in favour of the nobility. "We do not have the honour of being his relatives," he says about the hero of *Asya*, alluding to his own lack of noble origin, "there has even existed animosity between our families, because his family despised all those dear to us."\* But he admits to having certain cultural prejudices in favour of the nobility; he thinks — "an empty dream, but one that we find irresistible", he remarks—that the nobleman portrayed in Turgenev's story has performed some services to our society, that he is the representative of our enlightenment. Therefore Chernyshevsky still wishes "our hero and his confreres" well and wants to give them some good advice. A radical change in their historical position is being prepared, and what becomes of them will depend on their own will. "Your happiness or unhappiness for ever more depends on whether you will understand the demand of the age, whether you will be able to make use of the position in which you are now placed," says Chernyshevsky, addressing himself to "these estimable people".\*\* As for the demands of the age, they consisted, to his mind, in making concessions to the peasantry. Chernyshevsky exhorts the "estimable" gentlemen with this quotation from the Gospel: "Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Verily I say unto thee, thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing" (Matt., ch. V, verses 25 and 26).\*\*\*

It is self-evident that every theoretical conclusion concerning the capacity of a given social class or stratum for definite practical action always requires a certain degree of verification by experience, and that, consequently, it can be considered true a priori only within certain, more or less broad limits. Thus, for example, it was possible with absolute certainty to foretell that even the most educated section of the nobility would refuse to sacrifice their interests for the sake of the peasants. Such a prediction in no way required practical verification. But when it was necessary to determine to what extent the educated nobility were capable of making concessions to the peasantry *in their own* interests, then no one could say in advance with absolute certainty: they will not go in that direction beyond such-and-such a limit. Here it was always possible to assume that under certain circumstances the educated nobility would go a little further,

\* Ibid., p. 100.

\*\* Ibid., p. 101.

\*\*\* Ibid., p. 102.



after arriving at a somewhat more correct understanding of its own interests. Being practical, as Chernyshevsky was in this case, he not only could but had to endeavour to persuade the nobility that certain concessions to the freed peasants were required in its own interests. Thus, what might have seemed to constitute a contradiction in his article—the demand for a judicious and resolute step on the part of people whose incapacity for decision and wisdom is here admitted and explained as a necessary product of circumstances—was actually no contradiction at all. Such imaginary contradictions can also be found in the political practice of people who take their stand on the firm ground of the materialist explanation of history. However, here it is necessary to make a very essential reservation. When a materialist applies his theoretical conclusions in practice with a certain amount of caution, he can nevertheless guarantee that his conclusions contain a certain element of the most indisputable certainty. And this is because, when he says: “everything depends on circumstances”, he knows from what side one must expect the appearance of the new circumstances that will change the will of people in the direction he desires; he knows quite well that, in the final analysis, they are to be expected from the side of “economics”, and that the truer his analysis of the socio-economic life of society, the more trustworthy his prediction concerning the future development of society. Not so with the idealist, who is convinced that “opinions rule the world”. If “opinions” are the basic cause of social movement, then the circumstances on which the further development of society depends are linked chiefly to the conscious activity of people, while the possibility of any practical influence on this activity is dependent on the greater or lesser ability of people to think logically and master the new truths discovered by philosophy or science. But this ability itself depends on circumstances. Thus, the idealist who recognises the materialist truth that the character and also, of course, the views of man depend on circumstances, finds himself in a vicious circle: views depend on circumstances, circumstances on views. The thought of the “enlightener” in theory has never broken out of this vicious circle. In practice the contradiction was usually solved by a strong appeal to all thinking people, irrespective of the circumstances under which such people were living and acting. What we are now saying may appear unnecessary and for that reason a boring digression. But in point of fact this digression was essential. It will help us to understand the nature of the publicistic criticism of the sixties.

Since the hopes of the “enlightener” are pinned on the intellect and good will of thinking people, i. e., in effect on the “enlighteners” themselves, it is obvious that critics desiring to support these people will demand from fiction above all an *exact* depic-

tion of social life with all its pros and cons, with its "positive" and "negative" phenomena. Only an exact portrayal of all aspects of life can furnish an "enlightener" with the factual data needed by him for passing judgment on that life. But this is not all. We know that the criticism of the sixties demanded from fiction a more attentive attitude to the "negative" than to the "positive" aspects of life. It supported its demand by the argument that "negative" phenomena predominate over "positive" ones in our social life. This argument was, of course, correct in itself. Yet it did not explain anything at all. "Negative" phenomena predominated over "positive" ones in our country in the seventies, as well as in the sixties; yet our Narodniks were no longer content with portrayal of the negative aspects of our social life and believed that artists should portray the positive aspects as well. At least this applied to artists who aimed at portraying the life of the people, the so-called Narodnik belle-lettrists. Many readers of the seventies preferred N. Zlatovratsky to N. Uspensky simply because, to their mind, Zlatovratsky gave considerable space in his works to what the Narodniks considered the pleasant phenomena in peasant life (to portrayal of the peasant's communal instincts), whereas N. Uspensky dwelt more on the distressing phenomena (on portrayal of the individualism developing in the peasantry). Therefore both the readers and the "advanced" critics of the seventies were, as we shall now see from a very striking example, unfair to our fiction of the preceding decade that concerned itself with the life of the people. They believed that this fiction not only did not respect the people, but actually despised it. This was not so. There was an obvious misunderstanding here. But this misunderstanding is extremely characteristic and we must reveal its psychological cause.

If the Narodniks of the seventies demanded that fiction portray the pleasant phenomena of peasant life, this, one might say, borrowing from the language of the Scriptures, was the fount of materialist wisdom. The Narodniks already realised—very vaguely, but nevertheless they did realise, or at least were beginning to do so—that the world was ruled only by those opinions which expressed the objective course of the development of this world. It is this that explains the Narodniks' intense interest in the "pleasant" phenomena of peasant life. They hoped to find in these phenomena an objective guarantee of the future victory of their ideals. And that is why they were distressed by N. Uspensky, who showed them that this objective guarantee was by no means as reliable as they would have liked to think. But the "enlightener" of the sixties did not look for any objective guarantees of the victory of his ideal: for him the power of truth, the abstract correctness of "opinion" was a perfectly adequate guarantee of this victory. And the more mercilessly the fiction of his day revealed the defects

of the life and character of the people, the more readily he applauded it, because he saw in it more indications of what was to be rectified by him, the "enlightener". This feature of "enlightened" psychology was reflected in criticism as well.

In 1861 a volume of N. V. Uspensky's stories was published which Chernyshevsky reviewed in the article "*Is This Not the Beginning of a Change?*" in the November issue of the *Sovremennik* for that year. He praised N. V. Uspensky's stories for the fact that they did not "embellish popular customs and concepts". According to him, Turgenev and Grigorovich were guilty of such embellishment in their stories dealing with the life of the people. He compared the attitude of these two writers to the people with Gogol's attitude to Akaky Akakiyevich. <sup>119</sup> Gogol does not mention his hero's defects, because he regards these defects as totally irremediable. "Akaky Akakiyevich was a silly idiot.... But to tell the whole truth about Akaky Akakiyevich is pointless and shameless.... He can do nothing for himself, so let us incline others in his favour.... But if we tell others everything about him that could be told, their sympathy for him will be weakened by knowledge of his defects. Let us keep silent about his defects."\* Grigorovich, Turgenev and all their followers had precisely the same attitude to the people. In their writings the people appeared in the form of an Akaky Akakiyevich whom one can only pity and whom it would be cruel to blame. They speak only of his misfortunes: "See how meek and mild he is, how silently he endures insults and suffering! How he denies himself everything to which man is entitled! What modest desires he has! What meagre resources would suffice to satisfy and hearten this downtrodden being, that looks at us with such reverence, that is so ready to swell with infinite gratitude to us for the slightest help, for the least attention, for a single kind word from us! Read the stories of peasant life by Mr. Grigorovich and Mr. Turgenev and all their imitators—they reek of Akaky Akakiyevich's 'greatcoat'."\*\* All this was extremely noble. But it was of no use at all to the people. It was of use only to us who delighted in the awareness of our own goodness. In the person of N. V. Uspensky Chernyshevsky welcomed the appearance of a new stratum of educated Russians whose attitude to the people was different from the sentimental and condescending attitude of the gentry. Chernyshevsky expected a great deal from this stratum, in general, and from the literature which it might create, in particular. This literature would regard the peasant as soberly as it did people of other rank and station. Chernyshevsky tries to persuade his readers that this is as it should be. "Let us forget," he says, "who belongs to

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\* *Works*, Vol. VIII, p. 342.

\*\* *Ibid.*, p. 342.

high society, who is a merchant or petty bourgeois, who a peasant, let us consider everyone as simply people and judge everyone in accordance with human psychology, not permitting ourselves to conceal the truth from ourselves for the sake of peasant rank."\*

Chernyshevsky admits that N. Uspensky "represented the Russian common man as a duffer" who finds it hard to put together two separate thoughts in his head. "But what peasant can surpass ours in speed of understanding?" he asks. "Everyone says the same thing about the German peasant, and the French peasant, the English peasant is perhaps rated even lower still. French peasants have earned a world-wide reputation for terrible sluggishness of mind. Italian peasants are famed for their total indifference to the Italian cause."\*\* But there is no need to talk about the peasants: for them, to quote Chernyshevsky, "it is natural to play a savage role in history", for they have not yet "emerged from the historical period from which Homer's poems, the *Edda* and our *bogatyr* songs<sup>120</sup> have survived".\*\*\* The vast majority of people of all estates and all countries lives by routine and displays extreme slow-wittedness as soon as it moves out of its circle of customary ideas: "After any argument ask any of the arguers whether his opponents said intelligent things, and whether they were quick to understand and respond to his ideas. In only one case in a thousand a person will tell you that his opinions were challenged intelligently, sensibly. In the remaining cases, therefore, it is one of two things: either the people with whom the person questioned was arguing were really slow-witted, or he himself is slow-witted. And this dilemma embraces the whole thousand, with the exception of one case."\*\*\*\*

Here we find the same view of the masses as stragglers in a field army, which we examined in detail in a preceding section. Real participation in the movement is taken only by the thinking minority—the intelligentsia, to use the modern term—for whom it is essential to know all the defects characteristic of the masses, in order to remove these defects with time. Chernyshevsky was wrong in thinking that there was nothing arrogant in such an attitude to the masses. It undoubtedly contained its own very strong element of arrogance, which is, incidentally, quite inevitable for all those who adhere to the viewpoint of historical idealism.

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\* Ibid., p. 345.

\*\* Ibid., p. 356.

\*\*\* Ibid., p. 356. We offer these words for the enlightened attention of Mr. Ivanov-Razumnik, who considers Chernyshevsky one of the fathers of Russian Narodism.

\*\*\*\* Ibid., p. 356.

But, be that as it may, it is extremely interesting that one of the most eminent critics of the following decade, Mr. Skabichevsky whom we quoted above, disagreed fundamentally with Chernyshevsky in his appreciation of N. Uspensky's stories. Mr. Skabichevsky finds that they show the people in an incredibly ugly light. "The downtroddenness, obtuseness, and absence of any human likeness in the heroes of N. Uspensky stupefies one," he says, "when one reads his sketches. One sees people who are guided in their lives by nothing but coarse, bestial sensuality, who aspire to nothing but making a kopeck or spending it in a tavern; and even in these aspirations they do something incredibly stupid at every step."\*

This comment by Mr. Skabichevsky—like many, many other comments by him—is quite incorrect. N. Uspensky's works are not void of a certain exaggeration. This is true. But it is a long way from this to the view of the peasants ascribed to him by Mr. Skabichevsky. We would ask him, for example, whether the peasant mother portrayed by N. Uspensky in the story *The Old Woman* is really so stupid, coarse and animal-like.\*\* We would ask him whether the woman in the story *Katerina* is really "incredibly ugly".\*\*\* It is surprising that Mr. Skabichevsky did not notice some of the remarkable and truly excellent scenes in the long story *Sasha*.\*\*\*\* N. Uspensky does not hold the same place in our literature as Teniers and Ostade (according to P. V. Annenkov) in the history of Dutch painting, of course. Firstly, he was not their equal in talent, and, secondly, he had an entirely different attitude to the reality which he portrayed. He was a typical representative of the age of the sixties, who concerned himself with portraying the life of the people. He certainly did not aim at ridiculing the Russian peasant in his works. That he felt a strong sympathy for him in his own way can easily be seen by anyone who takes the trouble to read his works carefully. But he sympathised with the people in his own way, i.e., as an "enlightener", i.e., as a man who felt no need to idealise the backward masses. If he saw ugly features in the peasant character, he conveyed them in his picture without any hesitation, ascribing them to the "circumstances" of which Chernyshevsky so often speaks. "It is obvious," he says in his *Notes of a Country Farmer*, "that the peasant, brought up in slavery, could not suddenly become free in the true meaning of the word; as soon as the mist and fumes of serfdom had dispersed, we saw our peasant disfigured... the peasant is poor as before—and he will need a long, long time to recover after the collapse of serfdom.... And how is he to recov-

\* Skabichevsky, op. cit., p. 227.

\*\* N. V. Uspensky, *Works*, Moscow, 1881, Vol. I.

\*\*\* Ibid., Vol. II.

\*\*\*\* Ibid., Vol. I, pp. 417, 512.

er? Starting from scratch is a very tricky business.”\* To express such an opinion is by no means to mock the people. But this opinion could not be acceptable to the Narodnik—or the “subjectivist”, who was tainted with all the prejudices of the Narodniks—who was firmly convinced that the peasant was starting not “from scratch”, but from the commune which was waiting only for a beneficial stimulus from the people-loving intelligentsia to begin developing rapidly in the direction of the socialist ideal. N. Uspensky, however, would express himself even more emphatically. For example, he wrote: “Nothing is to be expected from the present-day peasants who not so long ago were the victims of serfdom: they will not be resurrected!... It is unlikely that medicine will ever cure atrophy, because the disease is based on *organic* damage....”\*\* It was very difficult for the “people of the seventies” to agree with this. It was chiefly this that gave rise to the unfavourable attitude of the critics of that period towards N. V. Uspensky.

The reader will perhaps ask: but was it easy for Chernyshevsky himself to agree with N. V. Uspensky’s completely hopeless view of “the present-day peasants”, since Chernyshevsky evidently considered possible at that time a broad movement of the people who were dissatisfied with the conditions of the abolition of serfdom. To this we reply that, obviously, this would not have been easy for him if he had considered himself bound to agree unconditionally with N. V. Uspensky. But that is precisely the point—he did not agree unconditionally with him. He considered N. V. Uspensky’s essays quite truthful; but he did not draw a hopeless conclusion from them. He said: “Routine dominates the ordinary course of life of common people; and among the plain folk, as in all other estates, the routine is just as dull and banal as in all other estates. Mr. Uspensky’s merit is that he had the courage to depict for us, without concealment or adornment, the routine thoughts and actions, feelings and customs of plain people. The picture is not at all attractive: at every step nonsense and dirt, pettiness and dullness.

“But do not be in a hurry to draw conclusions from this regarding the validity or non-validity of your hopes, if you wish to alleviate the lot of the people; or of your misgivings, if you have so far been concerned about the dullness and inertia of the people. Take the commonest, most colourless, weak-willed, shallow person: no matter how drab and petty the life he leads, it has in its moments of a totally different shade, moments of energetic efforts, courageous decisions. The same is also encountered in the history of every nation.”\*\*\*

\* *Works*, Vol. II, p. 201.

\*\* *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 202.

\*\*\* N. G. Chernyshevsky, *Works*, Vol. VIII, p. 357.

The circumstances, on which everything depends in the last resort, may take such a turn that even an apathetic mass will become capable of vigorous effort and courageous decision. While waiting for the moment when the circumstances take a favourable turn, one must study the backward masses attentively. The initiative in taking courageous decisions will never come from the mass of the populace; but one has to know the character of the people making up this mass "in order to know in what way initiative may stimulate them".\* And the more accurately fiction represents the character of the mass of the people, the more it will facilitate the task of those who, under favourable circumstances, will have to take the initiative in making great decisions.

We shall now ask the reader to recall that in one of the theses of his dissertation Chernyshevsky, emphasising the portrayal of life as the chief characteristic of art, adds: "works of art often have another significance—they explain life; often they also provide a verdict on the phenomena of life". What we have quoted, if only from one article "Is This Not the Beginning of a Change?", shows clearly to what extent literary criticism in the person of Chernyshevsky was inclined to value the portrayal of life chiefly as material for interpreting it and judging it (for passing a verdict on the phenomena of life). The same tendency of Chernyshevsky's manifests itself definitely in all his other literary articles. Here is what he says, for example, in a review of a collection of poetry by A. N. Pleshcheyev (*Sovremennik*, 1861, No. 3).<sup>121</sup>

He recalls with displeasure the time when our critics treated Pleshcheyev with scorn and even ill-will. "It seems monstrous now," he says. "Surely the noble sentiments and noble ideas which breathed from every page of Mr. Pleshcheyev's booklet were not so commonplace in the Russian poetry of the time as to be dismissed with scorn. When, indeed, is such a thing possible and permissible?" According to him, Pleshcheyev had no great poetic talent, and his aspirations and hopes were quite vague. But he did possess great sincerity, and as for expressing his hopes with greater precision, he could not do so for reasons beyond his control. Finally, none of us are so highly and impeccably developed that we can dismiss as useless a sincere voice defending, albeit in general outline, the better side of human nature. "There are many quite ordinary ideas and inherently human feelings," our author concludes, "which nevertheless have to be constantly mentioned so that they are not forgotten. This is necessary everywhere, to say nothing of our undeveloped society. Poets of such a noble and pure trend as that of Mr. Pleshcheyev will always be useful for social education and will find a way to young hearts. It would be hard

\* Ibid., p. 346.

to find a better application of the poetic qualities which he possesses."\*

Poetry should educate people for a better future, it should arouse in them energy and faith in their own powers. This was Chernyshevsky's view. It is, therefore, not surprising that, as he himself says, he reread with special pleasure in Pleshcheyev's booklet the splendid hymn which begins with the famous words:

*Forward, my friends, to lofty exploits  
Unfearing and with heads held high!  
The dawn of holiest redemption  
I've seen already in the sky!*

Such poetry could not fail to appeal to the "enlighteners". As we know, their liking for it evoked the ridicule of those who considered themselves to be connoisseurs of artistic works. We would appear to be entering again an age of disdain for the feelings which are expressed, inter alia, in Pleshcheyev's hymn.

We do not consider it superfluous, therefore, to say a few words in connection with the accusations made by the supporters of pure art against the "enlightenment" tendencies in our literary criticism. The supporters of pure art maintained—and, it appears, are not averse to repeating today—that our "enlighteners" neglected man's spiritual interests and put the interests of the stomach before all else. This, as we have already said elsewhere, is simply an absurd untruth. The "enlighteners" thought that art, by promoting the dissemination of rational ideas in society, would be primarily of intellectual benefit to mankind. And it was this benefit that they valued above all. Material benefit was in their eyes the simple result of people's intellectual development: as we know, it is not so easy for a pike to swallow a carp when the carp is not "dozing". In order to hasten the time of the carps' awakening, the "enlighteners" were ready to make any self-sacrifice, yet they were accused of valuing only "kitchen pots". This absurd untruth could have been expressed only by people who felt a more or less vague fear that the contents of their own kitchen pots would not be so tasty and abundant when the awakened carps began to take their own measures against the exploits of the pikes. This was so in Chernyshevsky's time; and it remains the case today. The people who ridicule civic themes in poetry today are usually—we do not say always; there are exceptions produced by mere thoughtlessness—clothing the most vulgar exploitative urges in "superhuman" attire.

In saying this, we certainly do not wish, however, to deny that the principles underlying the literary criticism of the sixties and elaborated primarily by Chernyshevsky could, if taken to the

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\* Ibid., p. 121.



extreme, lead to very one-sided conclusions. The criticism of the sixties often reached such conclusions in the person of D. I. Pisarev. But, firstly, one should not hold Chernyshevsky responsible for Pisarev; and, secondly, even Pisarev was very far from the pure rubbish which was ascribed to him frequently by his "aesthetic" opponents.

Concluding the first of his two articles entitled "Pushkin and Belinsky", which caused such a stir, Pisarev said: "While disagreeing with Belinsky in his assessment of individual facts and noting in him an unwarranted credulity and excessively strong impressionability, we are nevertheless far closer than our opponents to his basic ideas."\*

At the beginning of the second of these articles he repeated: "The criticism of Belinsky, the criticism of Dobrolyubov and the criticism of the *Russkoye Slovo* represent the development of one and the same idea which is increasingly being cleansed each year of all extraneous admixtures."\*\*

Which of Belinsky's "basic ideas" and which "extraneous admixtures" did he have in mind here? In order to answer this, it is necessary to provide a small piece of historical information.

In his article on Derzhavin Belinsky said: "The task of true aesthetics is not to decide what art should be, but to define what it is. In other words: aesthetics should not discuss art as something presupposed, as a kind of ideal which can be realised only in accordance with its theory. No, it should examine art as a subject which existed long before it and to the existence of which it owes its own existence." This was a truly brilliant idea, quite worthy of a person who had been brought up on Hegelian dialectics. However, an idea is one thing, and its realisation is quite another. To solve the task which Belinsky assigned to aesthetics, it was necessary to analyse thoroughly the connection between art and social life and to explain the latter from a scientific, i.e., a materialist point of view. And Hegel himself could not do this. After ironically taking leave of the Hegelian cap, Belinsky began to depart in his literary judgments from the golden rule expressed by him in his article on Derzhavin; he began occasionally to discuss not so much what art is as what it should be. In short: he began to talk like an "enlightener" sometimes. And in this respect Chernyshevsky was the most brilliant continuer of his cause. As an "enlightener" Chernyshevsky was interested far less in the theory of art than in the practical conclusions that could be drawn from this theory. But Feuerbach's philosophy, to his mind, made it possible to reconcile practice with theory; to place practical considerations as to what art should be on the

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\* D. I. Pisarev, *Works*, Vol. V, p. 63.

\*\* Ibid., p. 66.

firm foundation of a theory which revealed its true essence. The practical task of aesthetics is to rehabilitate reality. This proposition, which was substantiated by Chernyshevsky with the help of Feuerbach's philosophy, guided him in all his critical assessments. This proposition in itself—i.e., if one ignores the purely theoretical task which Belinsky had once assigned to aesthetics—contains absolutely nothing erroneous. But having once accepted this proposition, one might, without sinning against logic, ask oneself: is it aesthetics, i.e., the science of the beautiful, that is necessary for the rehabilitation of reality? Could not the same aim be attained with the help of other sciences, natural science, for example? And is aesthetics possible as a science?

It was to these questions that D. I. Pisarev devoted himself. And, as we know, he did not solve them in favour of aesthetics. He announced that the existence of aesthetics as a science was impossible and that if Chernyshevsky had devoted his dissertation to aesthetics, he had done so "only in order to destroy it radically and sober up once and for all those people who are taken in by philosophising and parasitic philistinism".\*

Against the possibility of aesthetics as a science Pisarev advanced the following argument, which he regarded as indisputable. "Aesthetics, or the science of the beautiful, has the rational right to exist only if the *beautiful* has an independent significance, irrespective of the endless diversity of personal tastes. If, however, the beautiful is only that which pleases us, and if, consequently, all the different concepts of beauty are equally legitimate, then aesthetics dissolves into ashes. Each person develops his own aesthetics, and, consequently, a general aesthetics which reduces personal tastes to a compulsory unity becomes impossible. The author of 'The Aesthetic Relation' leads his readers to precisely this conclusion, although he does not express it quite openly."\*\* This argument really would seem indisputable to an idealist. If art by its works merely reminds us of what interests us in life; if a person regards as beautiful that in which he sees life as he understands it, the conclusion that the concept of the beautiful depends in the final analysis only on personal tastes, the endless variety of which makes it impossible to examine them from a scientific point of view, i.e., from the viewpoint of the logic of their development, seems perfectly legitimate to the idealist. Pisarev, who was arguing in this instance as a pure-blooded *idealist*, overlooked the fact that Chernyshevsky had set himself the aim of applying the materialist philosophy of Feuerbach to aesthetics. And for the materialist, insofar as he remains a materialist and does not make any concessions to ideal-

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D. I. Pisarev, *Works*, St. Petersburg, 1894, Vol. IV p 499.

\*\* Ibid., same page.

ism in his views, "opinion" is not the most profound cause of the changes that take place in social life. Change and diversity of "opinions" are themselves determined by certain changes in it. And this makes it possible to examine the development of opinions from the viewpoint of logic also. For all the diversity of human opinions in general, it would be wrong to say that each person has his own special world outlook and his own distinctive views of all social phenomena. No, at any given time the people of a given class have—within certain limits—the same world outlook and, again within certain limits, the same view of social phenomena. And if even within a given class at a given period there is a dissimilarity of opinions, if within this class one finds different shades of a world outlook or the struggle of an old world outlook with a new one, this fact, by no means rare in history, does not prevent us from regarding the development of opinions from the viewpoint of science, i.e., logic, i.e., necessity. People's consciousness is determined by their being, and their opinions are determined by their social relations. Recognising, as a follower of materialist philosophy, the causal dependence of consciousness on being, Chernyshevsky argues in his dissertation that the idea of the "good life", the idea of life as it should be, which forms the basis of the concept of the beautiful, changes in accordance with people's class position in society. In so doing he not only does not destroy aesthetics as a science, but, quite the reverse, puts it on a firm materialist footing and outlines in general, at least, where one must look for a solution of the task that Belinsky assigned people interested in the theory of aesthetics. True, Chernyshevsky outlined the solution of this task only in a most general way and did not return to it again in his literary criticism, being engaged in a struggle with "fantastic dreams" on behalf of "reality". In his literary criticism he was an "enlightener" to the very core or, as Pisarev put it, referring to the French "Enlighteners" of the eighteenth century, a populariser of negative doctrines. Here too, as in his historical arguments, he abandoned materialism in favour of the idealist point of view. Pisarev, who wished to defend and develop his views further, saw in him the "enlightener" *only*, i.e., the idealist only. And therefore he could not see in his dissertation anything but the destruction of aesthetics. He did not suspect, and could not have done so, that Chernyshevsky's view of the aesthetic relation of art to reality contained a materialist aspect, which supports the possibility of aesthetics as a science. If anyone had pointed this out to him, he would probably have said, with a contemptuous shrug of the shoulders, that in this case Chernyshevsky had not yet managed to get rid of the shell of Hegelianism, just as Belinsky did not in his time either.\*

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\* See the article "Pushkin and Belinsky", *Works*, Vol. V, pp. 78-79.

Pisarev undoubtedly developed the views of both Chernyshevsky and Belinsky further; but he developed the aspect of them that was most guilty of idealism. Here is an example.

We already know that in his views on the life of society Chernyshevsky readily adopted the standpoint of human nature. But since human nature explains nothing in social phenomena, Chernyshevsky, who held a materialist view of human nature, was usually compelled to move onto idealist ground and argue according to the principle that "opinion rules the world". And when he argued in accordance with this idealist principle, he no longer remembered that the consciousness of social man is determined by his being, and he found it necessary to insist that all people were totally alike in their nature. In his article on the works of N. V. Uspensky he quotes a scene in which Uspensky makes the serf girl Alyona Gerasimovna carry on the following conversation with the clerk Semyon Petrovich:

"Well, that's inside people, Semyon Petrovich?"

"Different things. It depends what they eat: one man eats chaff, so there is chaff inside him. They say there was once a shoemaker who had a leather sole with chips of kindling wood inside him when they opened him up."

"What a dreadful thing! Tell me, please, do civilians and soldiers have the same things inside them?"

"Well, on that point, Alyona Gerasimovna, I will give you a full report. First, it must be said nothing is the same."

"The clerk sat down by the girl and began his explanation."\*

Chernyshevsky for his part argues in the same article that "people have the same things inside them", and, as we have already seen, invites his readers to forget who belongs to high society, who is a merchant and who a peasant, and to judge everyone in accordance with human psychology.

Pisarev takes up this invitation willingly, but draws the following conclusion from it:

"Instead of preaching with the voice of one crying in the wilderness about questions of popular spirit and civic life, on which belles lettres, possessing great tact, keep quiet, our criticism would do very well to pay a little more attention to questions common to all mankind, questions of personal morality and everyday relationships. The elucidation of these questions is a matter of necessity to everyone; these questions have been obscured and confused by a lot of old rubbish, which it would do no harm to push aside, so that each and every one might look at God's world and at good people with unprejudiced eyes."\*\*

This is pure "Pisarevism", the distinguishing feature of which is that questions of "personal morality" are of incomparably great-

\* *Works*, Vol. VIII, p. 346.

\*\* D. I. Pisarev, *Works*, Vol. I, p. 347.

er interest to it than those of "civic life". "Pisarevism" is sometimes regarded as an intellectual trend which has nothing whatever in common with the trend of Chernyshevsky and Dobrolyubov. This is a great mistake.\* In fact it is no more than a series of perfectly correct, although very extreme conclusions from certain incorrect premises which Chernyshevsky advanced in cases when he was betrayed by his insufficiently elaborated materialism—or, if you like, when he betrayed this materialism—and adopted an idealist viewpoint without realising it. Pisarev possessed tremendous literary talent. But for all the enjoyment that the unprejudiced reader derives from the literary brilliance of Pisarev's articles, it must be admitted that "Pisarevism" was a sort of *reductio ad absurdum* of the idealism of our "enlighteners".

This is best seen from his attitude to the question of how the poet differs from the thinker.

Belinsky said: "Every poetic work is the fruit of a powerful idea that dominates the poet. If we were to assume that this idea is merely the result of the activity of his intellect, we would thereby destroy not only art, but the very possibility of art. Indeed, who would not be able to become a poet through need, advantage or caprice, if all one had to do was think up an idea and squeeze it into a thought-up form? No, this is not how poets by nature and calling work! The work of a man who is not a poet by nature—although the idea thought up by him may be profound, true, even sacred—will be trivial, false, artificial, ugly, dead, and will not convince anyone, but rather disappoint everybody in the idea expressed by it, however true that idea may be! Yet this is how the masses understand art, and this is what they demand of poets! Think up a nice idea for them in your spare time, then set it in a flight of imagination, like a diamond in gold. And that's that!"

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\* As usual, the record for expressing erroneous views on the history of our thought belongs to our historian of modern Russian literature Mr. Skabichevsky. He represents "Pisarevism" as sensualism, very similar to the sensualism of the eighteenth century. "Just as in France in the Regency period the Versailles dandies, the marquises and viscounts strutted around parading their new ideas, avidly reading Voltaire and the Encyclopaedists and finding in their works a complete justification of their own frivolous behaviour which led them to extreme ruin, and later to the guillotine—we also see something similar in our country in the sixties, with the difference that Voltaire has been replaced by Feuerbach and Büchner, and the Encyclopaedists by Buckle, Lewes, Vogt, Moleschott, and so on. In precisely the same way, many sons of the gentry declared themselves to be new people and expressed their newness in quotations from favourite authors, the ostentatious rejection of the so-called 'authorities', contempt for the customs and decencies of high society, and total indulgence in all manner of lust and caprice." (Op. cit., p. 88.) It goes without saying that the former inveterate critic of *Otechestvenniye Zapiski* has not the faintest idea how close Chernyshevsky's materialist philosophy was to "the sensualism of the eighteenth century". But it is pointless to argue with him. We draw attention to his mistake merely to show how the history of our literature should not be written.

This argument is merely a new version of his main theme which says quite rightly that the artist thinks in images and not in syllogisms. But Pisarev, who maintains that he is merely developing Belinsky's basic ideas further, sees in this distinction between the poet and the thinker only "a very rich tribute to the aesthetic mysticism that draws a sharp dividing line between poets and ordinary mortals".\* He finds Belinsky deeply tainted with aesthetic mysticism which, according to him, even Dobrolyubov did not escape entirely. But he thinks that one touch of sober criticism would be enough to disperse this "mystical haze". It follows from his reasoning that any intelligent person who takes the trouble to acquire a certain technical proficiency, can become a poet, as he can become a critic or "a master of belles lettres in general". He actually says this: "Any man to whom intelligent ideas occur, who can retain and elaborate these ideas in his head, and who by means of exercise has become a master of belles lettres—any such man, I say, can, if he so wishes, become a poet, that is, create works that will affect readers in exactly the same way as works created by real, licensed poets."\*\* That this is not so, that not every intelligent person can become a poet, is self-evident and does not require any proof. But why, in expressing this mistaken idea, did Pisarev think that he was merely developing Belinsky's "basic idea" further? Because Belinsky himself sometimes regarded art from the abstract viewpoint of the "enlightener". He said, for example, that "Shakespeare conveys everything through poetry, but what he conveys by no means belongs to poetry alone". This gave grounds for thinking that there is a kind of special sphere which belongs exclusively to poetry and can be contrasted with other spheres which do not belong to poetry but may be "conveyed through poetry". This is precisely what Pisarev thought, when he assured his readers that any intelligent person could become a poet. He evidently meant that although not every intelligent person could become a master in the sphere of poetry as such, this did not matter because, having made himself a master of belles lettres, an intelligent person was capable of "conveying through poetry" a great deal. If in so doing he does not display any great power in the sphere of poetry as such, the only people who may reproach him for this are philistines brought up on the old aesthetic concepts or "semi-aestheticians" such as Belinsky who have not yet cast off the "shell of Hegelianism". In developing and arguing this idea with his customary ardour and talent, Pisarev had apparent grounds for thinking that he was being perfectly loyal to Belinsky's criticism. In fact, however, we repeat, he was loyal only to the weak aspects of this criticism, only to those of its shortcomings

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\* D. I. Pisarev, *Works*, Vol. V, p. 75.

\*\* D. I. Pisarev, *Works*, Vol. V, p. 78.

which were the result of the insufficient elaboration of certain of its propositions. Thus, the logical error made by Belinsky in his analysis of the theory of pure art gave birth to what Pisarev saw as the last word in the doctrine of negation.

If Belinsky had not betrayed his own theory in the heat of polemic; if he had remembered that the content of poetry is the same as the content of philosophy, and that the only difference between the poet and the thinker is that one thinks in images and the other in syllogisms, he would have seen the whole question of the theory of "pure art" in a completely different light. He would then have said that there is no special sphere of poetry; that poetry is always a reflection of social life, and that poetry that wishes to remain "pure" reflects only the social indifferentism of the social stratum which has created it. And if he had gone further and tried to find out what produces this indifferentism, he would have seen that at different historical periods it is produced by extremely diverse and even directly opposed causes, but that they are all rooted in social relations and have nothing whatever to do with the essence of art, or with its "laws" and techniques. In order to elucidate all this Belinsky would have had to apply materialist dialectics consistently to the study of the aesthetic development of mankind. But in the conditions obtaining in Russia at that time he could not do this, in spite of all his genius. Therefore, we find only elements of the materialist view of art in his writings. Unable to develop these materialist elements properly, in his dispute with the champions of pure art he made use willy-nilly of a weapon which is usually to be found in the arsenal of the "enlighteners". But the only arguments usually found in their arsenal are purely idealist ones. And it was these idealist arguments, whose main crime was their abstractness, that formed the basis of Pisarev's arguments which, when taken to their logical conclusion, "destroyed" aesthetics. We have said above that one must not hold Chernyshevsky responsible for Pisarev. And we repeat this now with respect to Belinsky: he too must not be blamed for the amendments that Pisarev made to his literary views. But we shall go even further and say that Pisarev himself was not to blame if he sometimes went to the point of absurdity (we say "sometimes", for he too did not always "destroy" aesthetics); the blame for this lies in the inconsistency of the idealist view of art, which does indeed lead either to the "mystical haze" of the theoreticians of "pure art" or to the conclusions of the "enlighteners" that are more or less "destructive" for aesthetics. One word more. Precisely because Pisarev carried certain idealist premises of our "enlighteners" of the sixties to the point of absurdity, he was the father of our notorious "subjective" method. In the article "The Process of Life" written in connection with Karl Vogt's *Physiologische Briefe*, he said:

"The natural sciences are not the same as history, not at all the

same, although Buckle seeks to reduce them to a common denominator. In history it is entirely a question of the views, the humane personality of the writer himself; in the natural sciences it is entirely a question of facts.... History is the interpretation of an event from the personal viewpoint of the author; any political party can have its own history of the world and does in fact have it, although, of course, not all these histories are recorded, just as every philosophical school has its own philosophical vocabulary. History is and always will be the theoretical justification of certain practical convictions which have been formed in the course of life and which have their own positive significance in the present. This cannot be said of the natural sciences, of course; nature does not care what you think about it; if you are wrong it will bruise or crush you, like the wheel of a huge machine which you have approached too closely while it was working at full speed."\*

Substitute the word "sociology" for the word "history" in this passage and you have a theoretical substantiation of the notorious "subjective" method. In contrasting history with natural science Pisarev repeated the same theoretical error that led him to the "destruction of aesthetics". He overlooked the fact that consciousness is determined by being and that if history is and always will be the theoretical justification of certain practical convictions, practical convictions do not appear out of thin air, but are conditioned by certain social relations, the development of which is as natural as the development of animal and plant species. This theoretical error has provided the basis for all the alleged sociological wisdom of our subjectivists led by N. Mikhailovsky. Mr. Skabichevsky, as is his custom, did not notice this and therefore, while condemning Pisarev's "destructive" exploits in the sphere of aesthetics, he enthusiastically welcomed Mikhailovsky's "subjective" discoveries. "His articles on Spencer, Darwin and sociology in] general," he says, "are not only of publicistic importance, but are a great contribution to science, and if they were to be translated into a foreign language they would quickly bring their author European fame."\*\*

Some of Mikhailovsky's sociological articles have now been translated into French and, if we are not mistaken, also into German. Presumably, however, they will not bring him European fame. But it is very possible that they will earn praise from this or that European thinker who is going "back to Kant!" out of hatred for Marxism. Contrary to the opinion of our latest historian of literature, there can be nothing flattering in this praise. But most worthy of note is the irony of history which makes a theoretical

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\* [D. I. Pisarev, *Works*, Vol. I], p. 311.

\*\* Op. cit., p. 120.



weapon of reaction out of what was an innocent theoretical mistake in a more or less progressive utopianism.

In conclusion we consider it necessary to make the following, most important, to our mind, reservation.

If the "people of the sixties" regarded fiction through the eyes of "enlighteners", i.e., demanded from it primarily "verdicts on the phenomena of life", this does not mean that they lacked artistic feeling. This cannot be said, at least, of their most outstanding and most brilliant representatives, Chernyshevsky, Dobrolyubov and Pisarev. In the works of each of them—and occasionally precisely where they go furthest in their rationality—one can find the most indisputable proof of the refinement of their literary taste. Let us take Pisarev as an example. In the very article in which he reaches, one might say, Herculean pillars of rationality, he makes the following comment in passing: "*The Reef*, a novel which is below all criticism in terms of literary merit, is a tremendous success, whereas Count L. Tolstoy's *Childhood, Boyhood and Youth*, a remarkably fine work in its subtlety and accuracy of psychological analysis, is read with indifference and passes almost unnoticed."\* This comment on a work by Tolstoy, i.e., a man totally uninterested in all the social and personal questions of such concern to the "people of the sixties", shows that Pisarev could have been a good "aesthetic" critic. We could find similar comments even in those articles in which he tries so hard to debunk Pushkin. Even here it is obvious that, while objecting strongly to the "philistine" views "of our sweet little Pushkin", Pisarev was aware of the perfection of *form* in his works.

That Dobrolyubov's "publicistic criticism" was extremely sensitive to the artistic merits of the works which it analysed, is now recognised, if we are not mistaken, even by people who have little liking for our "people of the sixties". But some of these people, while doing justice in this respect to Dobrolyubov, do not find the slightest trace of artistic feeling in Chernyshevsky's critical articles. And not only people with little liking for our "people of the sixties". Even Mr. Skabichevsky, who in his capacity of an inveterate critic of *Otechestvenniye Zapiski* was inclined to regard himself as a writer totally devoted to what was called here the finest behests of the sixties, comments as follows on Chernyshevsky's criticism:

"As for Chernyshevsky, he was the first to provide an example of the type of publicistic criticism which followed from his theory. In fact, his critical articles are far inferior to Dobrolyubov's articles. Above all, one finds in them an absence of that which his dissertation also lacks, i.e., aesthetic, and consequently also critical feeling, and this shortcoming led to a series of glaring

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\* D. I. Pisarev, *Works*, Vol. II., p. 270.

blunders. Thus, for example, Chernyshevsky was very contemptuous of and hostile towards Ostrovsky's drama *Poverty Is No Crime* from sheer party animosity and yet he welcomed with great enthusiasm the publication of Nikolai Uspensky's stories, seeing in them the end of sentimental idealisation of the people and the beginning of a real and sober attitude towards it, but not noticing all the superficiality and coarseness of Nikolai Uspensky's caricatures."\*

We have already said that Nikolai Uspensky's "caricatures" are by no means as bad as Mr. Skabichevsky thinks. We shall now say that Chernyshevsky's contemptuous review of the drama *Poverty Is No Crime* did not prevent him from paying tribute to Ostrovsky's "splendid talent" (his actual words) and praising highly the comedy *The Bankrupt*. If "party animosity" can be heard in his review of the drama *Poverty Is No Crime*, it must be remembered that in this case Chernyshevsky was attacking something that was not at all deserving of sympathy. He was ridiculing the critics who rated *Poverty Is No Crime* above *Hamlet* and *Othello*. Did not such an absurd exaggeration deserve to be ridiculed? He was speaking ironically about the Slavophil-inclined section of the public which saw Lyubim Tortsov as a splendid expression of the "Russian spirit" and thought that by creating this type Ostrovsky had said something new. It is true that Chernyshevsky went too far in saying that *Poverty Is No Crime* belonged to the same type of work as Ablesimov's *The Miller* and was simply a collection of folk songs and customs.\*\* But he was quite right when he said that in the drama in question Ostrovsky had lapsed into florid embellishment of something that could not and should not be embellished.\*\*\* Critics should acknowledge this today as well. Likewise they should acknowledge today as well that Chernyshevsky appreciated the great artistic importance of L. Tolstoy's works straightaway and very accurately. But this is not all. It would be no exaggeration to say that Chernyshevsky defined straightaway the distinctive feature of L. Tolstoy's artistic talent. In a bibliographical note on L. Tolstoy's *Childhood and Boyhood* and *War Stories* we find the following lines:

"Count Tolstoy's attention is concentrated primarily on the way in which feelings and thoughts develop from other feelings and thoughts; he is interested in observing how a feeling which arises directly out of a given situation or impression, under the influence of memories and the power of associations presented by the imagination, turns into other feelings, returns once more to its initial point of departure and wanders off again and again, changing along a whole chain of memories; how a thought en-

\* Op. cit., p. 66.

\*\* *Works*, Vol. I, p. 129.

\*\*\* Ibid., p. 130.

gendered by an initial sensation leads to other thoughts and is carried further and further away, fuses reveries with real sensations, dreams of the future with reflections on the present. Psychological analysis can take different directions: one poet is interested primarily in delineating characters; another in the influence of social relations and everyday collisions on the characters; a third in the connection between feelings and actions; a fourth in the analysis of passions; in the case of Count Tolstoy it is primarily the actual psychic process, its forms and laws, the dialectics of the soul, to give it a definitive term.”\*

This is an extremely subtle critical remark. And it is not made in passing by our author, but is developed by him in considerable detail. Chernyshevsky says that of our other outstanding poets the aspect of psychological analysis in question is most developed in Lermontov, but that in him too it still plays an excessively subordinate role and is rarely displayed. It is also very rarely encountered among the great foreign writers who, for the most part, present us not with the dialectics of thoughts and feelings, not with the transition of one feeling into another and one thought into another, but only with the two extreme links of this psychological process: only with its beginning and end. “This,” Chernyshevsky remarks, again most subtly, “is because most poets with a dramatic element in their talent are interested primarily in the results of the manifestation of the inner life, collisions of the inner life, collisions between people, in actions, and not in the mysterious process by means of which a thought or feeling is produced; even in monologues which, one would think, ought usually to serve as the expression of this process, what is almost invariably expressed is the conflict of feelings, and the noise of this conflict distracts our attention from the laws and transitions in accordance with which the association of ideas takes place—we are concerned with their contrast and not with the forms of their origin—the monologues, if they do not contain a simple dissection of static feeling, almost invariably differ from dialogues in appearance only: in his famous reflections Hamlet splits into two, as it were, and argues with himself; his monologues in fact belong to the same type of scene as the dialogues of Faust with Mephistopheles or the disputes of the Marquis Posa with Don Carlos.”\*\* Tolstoy does not confine himself to portraying the results of the psychic process of ready-made feelings; he is, as has been said, interested in the process itself; he is an unquestionable master in his portrayal. Herein lies, in Chernyshevsky’s opinion, the originality of Tolstoy’s talent. Chernyshevsky says that Tolstoy will probably write much more that will impress each reader with other, more striking qual-

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\* *Works*, II, p. 639.

\*\* *Works*, II, p. 642.

ities: profundity of ideas, vivid scenes of everyday life, etc.; but for the true connoisseur it will always be obvious that the real strength and power of his talent lies precisely in the quality in question.

This is perfectly true. And it is most worthy of attention that whereas Tolstoy—as can be seen clearly from P. Biryukov's recently published biography of him—regarded Chernyshevsky and those who shared his views with total disfavour and equally total misunderstanding, Chernyshevsky, for his part, was able not only to appreciate Tolstoy's talent, but to reveal its finest feature. This is indeed a great service to literature. To our mind, Chernyshevsky was assisted in it by the self-same rationality which is in general characteristic of periods of "enlightenment" and due to which the criticism of the sixties occasionally paid insufficient attention to the aesthetic aspect of the works which it examined. However alien all the views and aspirations of the "people of the sixties" were to Tolstoy, he too did not escape the influence of his day. In him too rationality was extremely strongly developed, but in his case it took a different direction: instead of analysing relations between people, Tolstoy, who was in fact quite indifferent to these relations and interested only in himself, analysed his own psychic life and in so doing developed the ability which is indeed the main distinguishing feature of his artistic talent.

Chernyshevsky goes on to defend Tolstoy against charges that there are no scenes of social life in *Childhood and Boyhood*. He remarks ironically that a great deal more is absent in these works, for example, battle scenes, historical reminiscences, descriptions of the Italian landscape, etc. "The author wishes to transport us into the life of a child," he remarks correctly, "and does a child understand social questions, does it have any idea of the life of society? This whole element is as alien to a child's life as army life is, and the principles of art would have been violated just as much if social life had been portrayed in *Childhood*, as if military or historical events had been portrayed in the novel. We are as anxious as anyone that social life should be portrayed in novels; but it must be understood that not every poetic idea permits of the insertion of social questions into the work; it must not be forgotten that the first law of art is the unity of the work and that therefore in portraying *Childhood* one must depict childhood and not something else, not social questions, not battle scenes, not Peter the Great and not Faust, not Indiana, not Rudin, but a child with its feelings and ideas."\*

Chernyshevsky repeats that Tolstoy has real talent and in this connection indicates what sort of works he regards as truly artistic. Tolstoy's works are artistic, which means that "in each of

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\* *Works*, II, pp. 645-46.

them the idea which he wanted to embody in the work is very fully embodied. He never says anything superfluous, because this would be contrary to the principles of art, he has never distorted his works with the addition of scenes and figures that are alien to the idea of the work. It is this that constitutes one of the main requirements of art".\*

All this shows that in the person of Chernyshevsky the criticism of the sixties, although marked in general by a preponderance of rationality, was nevertheless extremely far from the absurd one-sidedness of which its enemies accused it and which even its strange and slow-witted semi-friend Mr. Skabichevsky is not averse to foisting on it.\*\* We are firmly convinced that Chernyshevsky, who expected many great works from Tolstoy in the future, would not have written about *War and Peace* such truly and unpardonably one-sided pages—one-sided to the point of high comedy—as those which came from the pen of Mr. Skabichevsky. Some readers may say that this is self-evident in view of the "distance" which separates Chernyshevsky from Mr. Skabichevsky. We shall not argue or contradict. There is indeed a "vast distance" between them.<sup>122</sup> Yet Mr. Skabichevsky dared to presume that he was capable of criticising Chernyshevsky!

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\* Ibid., p. 647.

\*\* It must be noted, moreover, that Chernyshevsky challenged Count L. Tolstoy's social views most firmly, even caustically. Cf. his review of "Yasnaya Polyana". *Works*, Vol. IX, p. 117 et seq.

## CHERNYSHEVSKY IN SIBERIA<sup>123</sup>

[1913]

*Chernyshevsky in Siberia. Correspondence with friends.  
Part I (1865-1875). Part II (1876-1877).  
Article by Y. A. Lyatsky. Notes by M. N. Chernyshevsky.  
St. Petersburg, 1912. "Ogni" Publishers*

In front of me lie two volumes of N. G. Chernyshevsky's letters to his relatives—mainly to his wife and children—from Siberia. The letters in these two volumes go up to 1877 inclusive and are, in the full sense of the word, valuable "human documents". People who sympathised with Chernyshevsky's literary activity, so prematurely interrupted by his arrest and exile, always regarded him as a most outstanding person not only intellectually, but also morally. They were very much inclined to idealise him. Idealisation is most natural in such cases. Yet it is certainly not without its dangers: closer acquaintance with an idealised person sometimes leads to disappointment. But in this case there can be no question of such a danger. Chernyshevsky's letters from Siberia show that it was very difficult to idealise him to the appropriate degree. And the more the Russian reading public becomes acquainted with these letters, the greater will be its respect for this remarkably noble and resolutely steadfast man. It need only read them more. But "in these days" this is not so easily guaranteed.

By law the wife of a man condemned to hard labour has the right to follow him. N. G. Chernyshevsky loved his wife dearly; separation from her was undoubtedly a source of great suffering for him. But he was afraid that life in those remote and unhealthy parts would be very hard for her. And so, after arriving in Siberia, he began to think what he could do to ensure not only that his wife did not follow him, but that she forgot about him as quickly as possible. In a letter to A. N. Pypin from Vilyuisk of March 8, 1875, he makes an extremely instructive admission in this respect.

"A few years ago, during our meeting in Eastern Siberia, I begged Olga Sokratovna to marry one of the noble people, of whom there were many, who did not of course even dare to think of such a thing, but each of whom would have thought himself the luckiest man on earth, had he heard from her that which I asked her to say to one of them...."<sup>124</sup>

"I could not persuade her.—I let several months pass and stopped writing to her. I did not write for a whole year. She could not en-

ture it. What was I to do?—I found myself compelled to begin corresponding with her again" (Part I, p. 140).

In resuming the correspondence with his wife, however, N. G. Chernyshevsky did not abandon his plan, but merely delayed its execution. His task in relation to his wife remained as before. "The whole point is that she should not have any affection for me," he wrote to the same Pypin. "Then life will be good, good for the health" (p. 141), i.e., *her* health. In 1875 he tried to solve the task by a feigned quarrel with A. N. Pypin. Olga Sokratovna Chernyshevskaya, who was somewhat short-tempered by nature, sometimes quarrelled with the family of Pypin who showed the greatest concern for her and her two sons after N. G. Chernyshevsky's exile. She would inform her husband of these quarrels with the Pypins. He seized upon them with the intention of using them to make Olga Sokratovna lose all affection for him. He pretended to be completely on the side of his wife and demanded that his son Alexander should have nothing more to do with the Pypins, in whose house he lived. Then.... But let Chernyshevsky himself tell the story.

"The continuation was to have been as follows:

"When a reasonable amount of time had elapsed, that is, in a month or two I would write to my son Sasha in this vein:

"Haven't you broken off relations with them?'—And I know that this is impossible even materially, not only morally; that, to say nothing of the feelings and common sense of Sasha himself, it could not be allowed by Olga Sokratovna either; ... Sasha could not carry out the demands which I made of him, I knew, nor could Olga Sokratovna permit it.—And in April or May, when enough time had passed, I would have cause to write to Sasha in the following terms:

"So you refuse to obey, do you? Then you are no son of mine! and this in expressions even more crude than those addressed to you.

"That was the second part. And the third, and most important for me, would be written for me by Olga Sokratovna:

"When you became such a bad person, you ceased to exist for me and for my children,' she would have written. That is as true as two and two are four.

"And this was the most important palliative for my conscience. I do have a conscience. I should like to stop doing harm to those who are dear to me" (Part I, pp. 139-40).

As one might have expected, this strange piece of Machiavellianism did not result in what Chernyshevsky desired. A. N. Pypin wrote him a letter in which he tried to defend himself against Olga Sokratovna's accusations. This letter does him great credit by its content and dignified tone. Chernyshevsky replied to him as follows:

"Dear Sasha,

"I beg you, your sisters and Seryozha to forgive me for having upset you needlessly.

"I agree entirely with every word in your letter. All your arguments are quite true. But I knew that this was so when I wrote those offensive remarks to you. I knew *what* I was writing. Do you understand now? I simply intended to erase from your feelings all affection for me.

"I am sorry I was unsuccessful" (Part I, p. 139).

How little he was deluded by Olga Sokratovna's quarrels with the Pypins may be seen from the following passage:

"Dear friend, she is short-tempered by nature. But she herself is able to criticise these outbursts.—Her letters to me very often contain 'quarrels' with you, complaints about you.—'This was written in a moment of irritation,' she says about such passages in her letters, 'that was how it seemed to me then; but you know my character; I should not have lost my temper.'—My dear friend, of course, I am infinitely devoted to her. But this does not prevent me, naturally, from finding her serious feelings for you and her serious comments on the relationship between you quite right. Her serious feelings for you are affectionate ones; her serious remarks on the relationship between you are exactly the same as your own" (Part I, pp. 154-55).

Realising that his attempt to pick a quarrel with A. N. Pypin was bound to fail, N. G. Chernyshevsky did not know how to remedy the unpleasantness which he had caused him. The following lines, addressed to A. N. Pypin, are deeply and truly moving:

"Your letter is full of great nobility of soul. I should like to kiss your hand for it; that is improper; but I was not embarrassed to do so with certain people, when I was young" (Part I, p. 147).

These affectionate lines are repeated almost word for word in his letter to A. N. Pypin of March 28 of the same year:

"Your letter, my dear friend, is an extraordinarily noble one. I wrote to you in my first reply to it that I should like to kiss your hand for it. That would be too much, of course. So forget that I, unmindful of decorum, have done so in my thoughts" (Part I, p. 159).

These few passages enable us to judge what N. G. Chernyshevsky was like in his dealings with those closest to him.

Whatever one may think of the expediency of his attempts to make them lose all affection for him, one thing is indisputable: N. G. Chernyshevsky, the most outstanding representative of the advanced people of the sixties, who were, incidentally, accused of preaching egoism, appears to us in his letters as a man of the greatest nobility, the purest altruistic feelings. This is yet further proof of how little the people of the sixties were understood



by those who for some reason did not share their views.

And it is not altruism alone that one finds in Chernyshevsky's letters from Siberia. There is a strong note of stoicism in them. For example, he describes his position in exile as follows:

"As is my splendid custom, I am in perfect health. I live very well. I have plenty of money and all the basic necessities, and do not need anything. I beg you and the children: do not send me anything" (Part II, p. 71).

This is repeated in almost all his letters to his wife. Reading his comments on his position, one might think that at the end of his hard labour he was sent to a place which, if not perfect, was at least tolerable. His remarks about it change only when he begins to try and dissuade his wife from coming to him.

"Yes, my joy," he writes to her in a letter of May 17, 1872, "the journey here is long and very difficult; yes, almost the whole year round the post cannot get here without terrible hazards and long delays. From the middle of April to the end of the year—eight-and-a-half months; the journey from Irkutsk to Yakutsk is a difficult and very risky business; more difficult than travelling round the African interior. In these months it is positively impossible to travel here from Irkutsk for people who are unaccustomed to the Yakuts' way of life ... wilderness, no food, no help in the event of one of the usual accidents on route, an incredible distance to the post station.... Plus the terrible Yakut yurtas instead of post stations. These yurtas are far worse than decent stables" (Part I, pp. 38-39).

Such was the journey to Vilyuisk. And what has Chernyshevsky to say about life in Vilyuisk? Having described the pitiful material position of its inhabitants, he continues:

"I have grown accustomed to poverty, indeed. But I cannot remain indifferent to the sight of these people; their poverty stirs even my hardened soul. I have stopped going into the town, in order not to meet these wretched people; I avoid the paths along which they wander on the edge of the forest" (Part I, p. 39).

Wishing to give Olga Sokratovna an idea of the Vilyuisk climate, N. G. Chernyshevsky quotes the following dialogue in his letter:

"Are there murders here?"—"No, the inhabitants are quiet; but suicides are frequent."—"Why?"—"From tapeworms; nearly everyone here has tapeworms, and it makes a man so melancholy that he'll go and hang himself" (Part I, p. 41).

Now our author announces that "the St. Petersburg climate is ideal for the health compared with the one here". And at the end of the letter his main idea, his leitmotiv, comes out clearly:

"I am writing all this so that you, my joy, should understand the seriousness of my entreaty to you: do not come here, I beg you, do not come. Wait until I am transferred somewhere where it

will be more possible for you to live too." Reading this letter one involuntarily recalls the words which the governor says to Princess Trubetskaya in Nekrasov's *Russian Women*:

*The climate there is murder;  
I'm bound to drive this home to you:  
Don't travel any further!  
Oh, could you live in such a place,  
Where, when a person breathes,  
It isn't steam, but powdered ice  
That from his nostrils wreathes?  
Where cold and gloom reign constantly,  
And, in the brief hot spells,  
The marshes, never really dry,  
Exude such noxious smells?  
Yes.... It's a fearful spot. And even  
The forest beast takes flight,  
When all the land is shrouded over  
In endless-seeming night....\**

Chernyshevsky comforted himself with the hope that he would soon be transferred to a place where Olga Sokratovna could live without being subjected to excessively great privations and where he himself would be able to engage in literary work. This hope was not to be realised. He remained in Vilyuisk until 1883, when he was allowed to return to European Russia and live in Astrakhan. But this was only a few years before his death. He probably did not take long to realise that his hope was a vain one: he knew his enemies well. If he continued to express the hope that he would soon be moved to a more convenient place in letters to Olga Sokratovna, he did so probably merely in order to reassure her.

The habit of work did not leave him even in Vilyuisk. He read and wrote a great deal there, but, deprived of the possibility of printing his works, he destroyed what he had written. The fate of the Russian writer in general has never been an enviable one. In the history of our literature there are very few

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\* In his letters to his wife the stoic exile insisted that the terrible climate of Vilyuisk was not bad for him. But in one of his letters to Pypin he inadvertently spoke of the true state of his health. He confessed that he had rheumatism all over his body, anaemia, remains of scurvy, and, on top of all that, goitre (see Part I, pp. 156-57). It should also be added that it was quite impossible to expect any serious medical assistance in Vilyuisk. And even serious medical assistance would not have meant much in the terrible Vilyuisk climate. And Chernyshevsky realised this. In a letter to his son Alexander of August 14, 1877, he says: "There is no medicine that can help rheumatism that is kept up by the climate" (Part II, p. 192). In the same letter we find a most significant reservation: "But do not think that I am excessively weak; no, I am weak, it is true, but not very weak" (Part II, p. 193).

famous names who did not incur the persecution of the "solicitous" authorities. But in the whole history of this literature there is no fate more tragic than that of N. G. Chernyshevsky. It is difficult even to imagine how much bitter suffering this literary Prometheus endured proudly throughout the long period when he was so methodically tormented by the police vultures.

Chernyshevsky's letters from Siberia contain a wealth of material, incidentally, that throws light on his world outlook. After reading them over carefully several times, I can say that they have provided me with new proof of the accuracy of the description of this world outlook given in my book *N. G. Chernyshevsky*. Here is a good example.

In the book in question I showed him as a convinced follower of Feuerbach. Although, to my mind, it was difficult to doubt the accuracy of such a portrayal, I am glad to be able to quote this passage from N. G. Chernyshevsky's letter of April 11, 1877, to his sons:

"...If you want to have an idea of what, in my opinion, human nature is, find this out from the only thinker of our century who, to my mind, had perfectly correct ideas on things. Ludwig Feuerbach! It is now fifteen years since I last reread him. And before that there were many years when I did not have the time to read him a great deal. And now, of course, I have forgotten everything I knew from him. But in my youth I knew whole pages of his by heart. And, as far as I can judge from my faded memories of him, I remain his loyal follower.

"He is antiquated?—He will be antiquated when another thinker of the same stature appears. When he appeared, Spinoza grew antiquated. But it took more than a century and a half before a worthy successor of Spinoza appeared.

"Locke, Hume, Kant, Holbach, Fichte and Hegel, none of them had such power of thought as Spinoza, to say nothing of today's celebrated small fry such as Darwin, Mill, Herbert Spencer, etc., and even less of such blockheads as Auguste Comte. And before the appearance of Feuerbach, one had to learn to understand things from Spinoza, who, antiquated or not at the beginning of this century, for example, was nevertheless the only reliable teacher. This is now the position of Feuerbach: no matter whether he is good or bad, he is incomparably better than anyone else" (Part II, p. 126).

This passage is worthy of great attention in many respects. Above all, the comparison of Feuerbach with Spinoza is interesting and important for history. Chernyshevsky saw Spinoza as Feuerbach's philosophical predecessor. And this is a perfectly correct view. But today this perfectly correct view generally astounds people interested in the history of philosophy. Under the influence of the idealist reaction which prevails at the present

time the attitude towards Spinoza is as incorrect as that towards Feuerbach. It is therefore not surprising that the relation between these two thinkers is also not understood.

Equally characteristic of Chernyshevsky is his attitude to Auguste Comte. At the present time there is a tendency in German philosophical literature to represent Feuerbach's philosophical views as a type of positivism.\* But there is a tremendous difference between Comte's positivism and Feuerbach's materialist "anthropologism". Feuerbach did not reject the cognisability of the world. Whereas Comte, even if he did not reject it entirely, limited the idea of it excessively. This is why Chernyshevsky, who remained to the end of his days a loyal disciple of Feuerbach, had an extremely low opinion of Comte's notorious *Cours de philosophie positive*.

"Basically," he says in a letter to his sons dated April 27, 1876, "it is a belated degeneration of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. Kant's work is explained by the state of the science in Germany at that time. It was an inevitable compromise between scientific thought and the unscientific conditions of life. So what! Kant cannot be blamed for having invented nonsense (i.e., he did not even invent it, but found it in Hume, whom—ironically!—he wanted to refute by paraphrasing): he had to teach something that was not totally repulsive. So he decided: 'What is true and what is false, we do not and cannot know. We only know our attitude to something unknown. I shall not speak of what is unknown: for it is unknown.' But in France in the middle of the present century this absurd concession is nonsense which is quite superfluous. Yet Auguste Comte zealously repeats: 'unknown', 'unknown'.—But for thinkers who do not wish to seek for or tell the truth, this decision is most convenient. Here lies the key to the success of Auguste Comte's system" (Part II, pp. 27-28).

It is worth noting that Chernyshevsky ranks Mill, whose political economy he had translated and commented upon, among "today's celebrated small fry". In the latter he also includes Darwin and Herbert Spencer. In other letters, however, he acknowledges Darwin's vast scientific knowledge and brilliant mind. If Darwin is called "small fry" here, this is one of the excessively strong expressions which are frequently found in Chernyshevsky's letters and against which he himself cautions his sons. Nevertheless, it is quite indisputable that our great writer was always strongly prejudiced against Darwin. I have already discussed this in my book *N. G. Chernyshevsky*. I shall put it briefly here. Chernyshevsky was wrong in his attitude to Darwin. But in order to understand the origin of his mistaken

\* See, for example, Friedrich Jodl, *Geschichte der Ethik als philosophischer Wissenschaft*, 2nd ed., II. Band, erstes Buch, VIII. Kapitel, II. Abschnitt: "Deutscher Positivismus".

view of Darwin's theory, it is essential to remember what ridiculous use many naturalists made in their disquisitions on social life of Darwin's theory of the struggle for existence. His just indignation at the ridiculous mistakes of Darwin's disciples made Chernyshevsky unjust in relation to their teacher.

The reader will, I trust, have noticed that Chernyshevsky places the name of Holbach next to those of Locke, Hume, Kant, Fichte and Hegel. This again is most characteristic of him as a materialist. An enthusiastic follower of Feuerbach, he could not disparage those whom he regarded as his teacher's predecessors. It is true that Holbach himself was not a brilliant philosopher. He cannot, of course, be put on a level with Hegel. But in speaking of Holbach, Chernyshevsky probably had in mind the author of the famous work *Système de la nature*. This work was written by a whole circle of the most outstanding materialists of the day, including such a leading light as Diderot.<sup>128</sup> And, of course, only the idealist prejudices of our present-day historians of philosophy can explain the fact that these gentlemen speak of the *Système de la nature* only in passing, accompanying their brief comments on it with a contemptuous shrug of the shoulders. Chernyshevsky was probably fully aware of the "real motives" behind such undeserved contempt.

In his views on nature N. G. Chernyshevsky was and remained a consistent materialist. "From early youth," he says, "I was a firm adherent of the strictly scientific trend, the first representatives of which were Leucippus, Democritus, etc." (Part II, p. 26). He saw Feuerbach as the greatest representative of the strictly scientific, i.e., materialist trend in the history of human thought. In a letter to his sons of July 21, 1876, Chernyshevsky describes his general ideas about nature "in a few words" as follows:

"That which exists is called matter. The interaction of the parts of matter is called the manifestation of the qualities of these different parts of matter. And we express the actual fact of the existence of these qualities by the words 'matter possesses the power of action', or, to be more precise, 'of exerting influence'. When we define the mode of action of qualities, we say that we are finding 'laws of nature'. Each term here is disputed. But the actual significance of these disputes is something quite different from serious doubt as to the facts expressed by the combinations of words in which these terms are put. It is empty scholastics, a mere parading of grammatical and lexicographical knowledge and talent and syllogistic tricks; if it is not so, the words of those who dispute these terms and these combinations of terms (or equivalent ones) are governed by a desire which is not scientific, but mundane, simply selfish; and with those who defend these terms and their combination the wish to conduct the dispute

about these terms is no more than naïveté, which is unable to understand that either the dispute is idle talk, or it should be transferred from these terms and their combinations to the analysis of the real motives behind the attacks on these terms and their combinations by their opponents" (Part II, pp. 45-46).

This comment about the real motives that give rise to attacks on materialist terms and "their combinations" (i.e., on the concepts which they denote) is not only right, but deeply thought out and well expressed. The ideologists of the ruling class are, indeed, up in arms against materialism today, in obedience to very "real motives": they regard idealism as the only reliable spiritual weapon in the struggle against the "destructive" urges of the modern proletariat. And there can be no doubt that any thinking person who would like to understand the origin of the present-day idealist reaction in philosophy would have to begin with an analysis of the "real motives" which prompt the present-day bourgeois (and bourgeois-influenced) wisdom-lovers of all lands to consider it a point of honour to turn their backs contemptuously on materialism. In pointing to the need for such an analysis, Chernyshevsky was adopting the standpoint of the materialist explanation of history. But, generally speaking, although a consistent materialist in his interpretation of nature, Chernyshevsky remained an idealist in his view of history. His letters from Siberia will probably convince even Y. M. Steklov of that. It is not surprising that Feuerbach's loyal disciple held an idealist view of history: Feuerbach himself held it and so did all Feuerbach's German followers. This view is extremely characteristic of the whole pre-Marxian period in the history of materialism.

A list of the books sent to Chernyshevsky in Siberia in 1872 has survived. Among them we find Marx's *Capital* (see Part I, p. 182). But in Chernyshevsky's letters from Siberia which have been published up to now there is no indication of the impression which Marx's famous book made on him. His mode of analysing the course of historical development, however, shows that whatever this impression was, it did not shake his historical idealism in the slightest. Thus, on the basis of Chernyshevsky's letters I can repeat with full conviction the conclusion to which I arrived, on the basis of his works, in my book about him: Chernyshevsky's thought was developing along the same path which led West-European thought to Marxism; but the unfavourable conditions of Russian social life prevented our great writer's thought from reaching the end of this path and it remained at the penultimate stage, i.e., the philosophy of Feuerbach.

For a long time the Russian reading public of the Left camp attached tremendous importance to Chernyshevsky's politico-economic works, giving little, or rather no thought to his philosophical views. In my book on him I pointed out that Cherny-

shevsky's philosophical views have retained incomparably more significance than his politico-economic theories. The truth of this statement is confirmed in a most unexpected for me and very unusual way by Chernyshevsky's letters from Siberia. It is clear from them that N. G. Chernyshevsky himself, while remaining firmly convinced of the correctness of his philosophical views, began during his stay in Siberia to be rather critical of his main politico-economic work: his comments on Mill's book. "There are some astonishing things there," he says in a letter of April 21, 1877, to his sons. As one of these things he mentions his idea that in its basic phonetic laws modern Persian is half-way between High German and Low German. He was led to make this mistake, according to him, by Leibnitz, whose evidence he accepted too hastily (Part II, p. 140). But this mistake by N. G. Chernyshevsky is of far less interest to me than another of his errors which has a direct bearing on political economy. Here is what he himself says about this error.

"I can remember another curious error in those comments on Mill. There are some calculations there on the effect of agricultural improvements on the grain harvest. Whole columns of figures. All worked out with logarithms. But I'll be damned! The column of results is worked out using a scale which I rejected, deleted, and the main column using another scale. So what you have is something like:

$$\begin{aligned} 2 \times 2 &= 5 \\ 3 \times 2 &= 7\frac{1}{2} \\ 4 \times 2 &= 9\frac{2}{3} \end{aligned}$$

"This curious error in my scholarly works was discovered not by me, but by one of my acquaintances who had the patience to check all my arguments with logarithm tables. He was most upset by this oversight of mine" (Part II, pp. 140-41).

I also noted this error by Chernyshevsky in my book about him (see p. 508 et seq.). I trust the reader will forgive me for taking the liberty of drawing his attention to this. My own intellectual development was greatly influenced by Chernyshevsky, the analysis of his views was a most important event in my literary life, and I cannot remain indifferent to the question of how successful this analysis was. All the more so since it has been called unsuccessful and even biased in certain quarters. It was most pleasant for me to see that the truth was not on the side of my strict critics.\*

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\* One strict critic—the late Antonov, if I am not mistaken—was particularly indignant at my reference to arithmetical errors in Chernyshevsky's critical remarks on Malthus' theory. He maintained that this reference resulted from a total and most shameful lack of arithmetical knowledge. I

In his letters of June 15, 1877, to his son Alexander, N. G. Chernyshevsky informed him that he had received A. N. Pypin's *Life of Belinsky*, Kostomarov's *Russian History in Biographies* and Vasilchikov's book *Landownership and Agriculture*, adding:

"I am particularly grateful to you for the third of them, because in sending it you took a great deal of trouble to select a book to my taste. This is so. But—forgive me for this discourteous addition—it is a very old taste of mine, and I gave it up long ago. These subjects have ceased to interest me. I realised that they were trivial. The important thing is not these specialities, but the general character of customs. In the case of savages, however much one may try to organise this or that aspect of their life, that life will nevertheless be bad. In the case of peoples who want to live as human beings, and not as wild animals, each individual defect in the organisation of their life is remedied without a great fuss about remedying it. Thus: everything is reduced to questions of a moral, not a material nature. Do not think that I have no praise for Prince Vasilchikov's book. It is splendid. And its author is a man of truly noble soul. But the subject of the book is of no interest to me" (Part II, pp. 181-82).

It would be hard to find a more vivid expression for historical idealism than these words "everything is reduced to questions of a moral, not a material nature". In reality man's moral development is in close causal dependence on his material, i.e., economic development. And this is far more in keeping with Feuerbach's philosophy, according to the general and exact meaning of which it is not consciousness that determines being, but being that determines consciousness.\* But this is not the point here: there is no need to reiterate that in his view of the course of human development Chernyshevsky was not true to Feuerbach's philosophy, just as Feuerbach himself was not. The passage just quoted is worthy of attention because of the bitterness which comes out in it so strongly. "In the case of savages, however much one may try to organise this or that aspect of their life, that life will nevertheless be bad." This remark obviously refers to Russia and shows that he took a rather pessimistic view of our social life at that time. But I think there is no doubt that it was the result of merely a passing mood. In general, his historical views were marked by a healthy optimism at that time too. In a letter of April 11, 1877, he admits that evil has great power in the

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trust that had my merciless critic had the opportunity of reading the above-quoted passage from Part II of Chernyshevsky's letters from Siberia, he would have relented and changed his tone.

\* Not content with this general proposition, Feuerbach frequently returned in the latter years of his life to the idea that people's morality is closely dependent on their material position. And Chernyshevsky himself often repeated this idea in his works.



life of society. "But how does that affect our world outlook?" he asks. "Little by little people's reason cast off the yoke of their weaknesses and vices, and little by little people were improved by the power of reason even in the days when they were still half apes. So we have even less right to take a gloomy view of people now that they are far more reasonable and better than the gorilla and the orang-outang. We are learning gradually. And we are gradually learning to be good and live rationally. It is a slow process? Yes. But we are very weak creatures. It is to the credit of our ancestors that they reached and brought us to the results of labour which we now enjoy. And our descendants will pay us the same tribute; they will say of us: 'they were weak creatures, but they did not labour for their own and our benefit in vain'" (Part II, p. 131).

The police vultures did not succeed in tearing out of the heart of the Russian literary Prometheus his joyous belief in a better future for mankind. Chernyshevsky retained this belief to the end of his days, of course.

Chernyshevsky's assessment of himself as a writer in his letters of April 11, 1877, is also extremely interesting. Addressing his children, he writes:

"You are aware, I trust, that as a stylist I am an extremely bad writer. Out of a hundred bad writers you will probably find only one as bad as I. The merit of my literary life lies elsewhere; in the fact that I am a powerful thinker" (Part II, p. 123).

Obviously there is not the slightest need to show that N. G. Chernyshevsky was by no means such a bad stylist as he makes himself out to be here: his style of exposition is not devoid of a certain charm; it contains no brilliance, but a great deal of clarity and unusual simplicity. But he was indubitably far more powerful as a thinker than as a stylist. With regard to his activity as a thinker, it is most reminiscent of that of the eminent Encyclopaedists of the eighteenth century. Its main aim was to enlighten the reading public. But in order to gain the opportunity to enlighten the reading public, he had first to arrange his own views in a more or less orderly system. Each piece of information which Chernyshevsky acquired was of value to him only insofar as it helped him to work out his own consistent world outlook. Like the eminent French Encyclopaedists, he possessed a great deal of knowledge. But he never sought to become a specialist. In the same letter he says: "it was only Latin that I studied in the way youths or children study: paying attention to all the details of the given branch of knowledge, without distinguishing between the important and the unimportant. All the rest I studied as an adult, with an independent mind: distinguishing between facts which were worthy of attention and those which were not. Therefore in each branch of knowledge which I studied, I did not

want to fill my head with the many facts which specialists parade: they are empty, meaningless facts" (Part II, p. 124). The reader will, perhaps, remember that Rakhmetov in the novel *What Is to Be Done?* worked according to the same system. This system has its weaknesses. But its strength lies in the fact that it eliminates the one-sidedness of ideas which is so characteristic of most specialists. Chernyshevsky pointed out quite rightly and most disapprovingly that this one-sidedness prevailed in both the social and natural sciences. He writes: "In general natural science is worthy of all respect, sympathy and approval. But it too is liable to serve as a device for idle and foolish talk. This happens to it on a very large scale, very often; because the vast majority of naturalists, like all other scientists, are specialists who lack a proper general academic education, and therefore, when they feel like philosophising, they do so quite indiscriminately, in any old way; and nearly all of them are fond of philosophising" (Letter of September 15, 1876, Part II, p. 57). As an example Chernyshevsky usually took the unfortunate way in which materialists applied the idea of the struggle for existence to the doctrine of social development. Another example which he used was the so-called Ber's law, which says that the degree of perfection of an organism is proportionate to its differentiation (this is how Chernyshevsky formulates the law). In the opinion of our author, to think in this way is to apply politico-economic ideas to biology uncritically. He maintains that it is not differentiation that should serve as the criterion of the perfection of an organism:

"If an organism has a nervous system, the main standard for determining the degree of perfection of that organism is the degree of development of its nervous system. But is it easy to determine the degree of development of the nervous system by anatomical or morphological means generally? No, in most cases it is a labour as yet beyond our powers. But the functions of the nervous system are easily observed, and the essence of the merit of the nervous system in any animal lies in these functions. Is the organism of an elephant or a horse more highly differentiated than that of a sheep or a cow? I think not. But the horse is cleverer than the sheep; the horse is a more perfect organism. This is the main criterion. The degree of ability of the rest of the organism to meet the requirements of the nervous system is a secondary criterion. Out of two breeds of horses of equal intelligence, the most perfect breed is that with the strongest, most indefatigable muscles.... There are many secondary criteria, not only muscles: there is the ability of the stomach to digest food, the ability of the locomotive organs to move the organism about (in the case of the horse this is the degree of strength in its hooves), the degree of health of the whole organism (this, I assume, is the

degree of stability of the blood in its normal composition), etc., etc. But all these are physiological criteria, not morphological criteria which are the only ones involved in Ber's law and which are, it is true, connected with the physiological ones, but are of no direct significance whatever for anyone except painters and other lovers of artistic contemplation" (Part II, p. 58).

Chernyshevsky makes the reservation that the standard which he has given for determining the degree of perfection of an organism is not applicable to botany. Evidently this is because plants do not have a nervous system. But a considerable part of the animal kingdom does not have it either. Therefore in zoology too it could only be applied with a most important reservation. But the examination of this question would cause us to digress from the point. I wish to show merely that the standard applied by Chernyshevsky to determine the degree of perfection of an organism is of more than just biological significance in his eyes. It is closely connected with his historical views. Progress consists in the improvement of human ideas and habits. This improvement depends on the growth of intellectual power. And the growth of intellectual power is determined by the development of the organ of thought, i.e., the brain (see N.G. Chernyshevsky, *Collected Works*, Vol. X, Part 2, Section IV, pp. 182-83). Thus, the standard in question unites the *historical* development of the human race with its *zoological* development. And there is every justification for thinking that if our author was displeased with the lack of attention of zoologists to this standard, this was because he particularly valued it as an historian.

Displeased with the one-sidedness of the ideas which prevailed among the naturalists, Chernyshevsky also objected strongly to the "old commonplace ideas" that abounded, according to him, in history books. "There are so many of them," he writes in his letters of March 17, 1876, "that to list them would be like counting the stars in the Milky Way or the grains of sand on the seashore. But the general characteristic of all of them, both old and new, is that they contradict the rules of honour and goodness. Goodness and rationality are two terms which are basically equivalent. They are the same quality of the same facts, merely seen from different points of view; what rationality is from the theoretical point of view, goodness is from the practical point of view, and vice versa: what is good is necessarily rational. This is the basic truth of all branches of knowledge that relate to human life; therefore it is also the basic truth of universal history. It is the basic law of the nature of all intelligent beings. And if there are intelligent beings on any other planet, it is also an immutable law of their life, just as our earth's laws of mechanics or chemistry are immutable for the motion of bodies and the combination of elements on that planet also. The criterion of

historical facts of all times and all peoples is honour and conscience" (Part II, p. 19).

If, after assimilating this "basic truth of all branches of knowledge that relate to human life", we were to try to construct upon it a method of investigating social phenomena, we would be greatly disappointed. The task of scientific investigation is to discover the causes that have produced a given course of a given progress of development. From this point of view the goodness and rationality which we observe in people's social life are themselves consequences produced by causes that cannot be assessed with the help of the concepts of goodness and rationality. But Chernyshevsky regarded social phenomena primarily from a practical point of view. He was interested not so much in *what was*—although as an extremely intelligent person he was greatly interested in this too—as *what should have been*. He himself says so in the final passage of his *Outlines of Political Economy*. "Our outlines have not managed to include that part of the theory which, in our opinion, is the most important in science," we read there. This is the view of the practical reformer, the viewpoint of direct action. And from the viewpoint of direct action Chernyshevsky's remarks about goodness and rationality in the life of society acquire tremendous significance. As a practical rule by which the advanced social man of action should be guided, Chernyshevsky's idea coincides almost word for word with what the famous International said in its Inaugural Address to the proletariat of the world. Pointing to an international policy, the Address stated that the time had come to proclaim "the simple laws of morals and justice" as the standards which should determine mutual relations not only between individuals, but also between whole nations.<sup>126</sup>

Extremely characteristic of Chernyshevsky is his attitude to Nekrasov. In a letter of August 14, 1877, to A.N. Pypin he said:

"I have, naturally, read in *Otechestvenniye Zapiski* Nekrasov's poems which say that, weak and suffering from a grievous illness, he is awaiting death. I saw that this was no embellishment, to make thoughts more poetic, but the real truth. Yet I wished to retain hope and almost succeeded in convincing myself that he would recover: I thought it was simply the weakness of old age; this was still premature for him; and perhaps his doctors would be able to handle it. I was deeply grieved to read that his death was already inevitable and close when you wrote your second letter; if, when you receive my letter, Nekrasov is still with us, tell him that I loved him ardently as a person, that I thank him for his kindness to me, that I kiss him, and that I am convinced that his fame will be immortal, that Russia's love for him, the most brilliant and noble of all Russian poets, is eternal.

"I weep for him. He was, indeed, a man of very high nobility

of soul and greatness of mind. And as a poet he stands, of course, above all other Russian poets" (Part II, p. 200).

A.N. Pypin conveyed these words of Chernyshevsky's to the dying Nekrasov, and they naturally gave great joy to this man who had suffered many unjust accusations. As for the view of Nekrasov as the greatest Russian poet, this was shared at that time by the whole of our radical intelligentsia. When Dostoyevsky said in his speech at Nekrasov's graveside that he "should stand immediately after Pushkin and Lermontov", there were shouts of "He was above them, yes, above them" from some groups of revolutionary young people at the cemetery. The writer of these lines was among those who shouted.

In conclusion a word or two about this point. There has been a great deal of fuss here recently about the late L.N. Tolstoy, who is represented as a kind of inimitable "teacher of life". But it is enough to compare Chernyshevsky's letters from Siberia with the letters of Tolstoy that are available to the reading public to realise from which of these two writers we must learn about life.

## **II**

**[WORKS  
ON  
V. G. BELINSKY]**

# BELINSKY AND RATIONAL REALITY<sup>127</sup>

[1897]

*Lucifer.* Was not thy quest for knowledge?  
*Cain.* Yes, as being the road to happiness.

*Byron, "Cain"*

At that time we were searching in philosophy for everything but pure thought.

*I. S. Turgenev*

## I

"The fundamental question about Hegel's influence on Belinsky's world outlook has been raised by most Russian critics, but no one has examined it with due thoroughness by comparing certain of Belinsky's views with their primary source," says Mr. Volynsky; "nor has anyone considered the actual original content of his aesthetic views with proper attention or subjected them to impartial scrutiny on the basis of a definite theoretical criterion."\*

All this is not in the least surprising in view of the fact that before the appearance of Mr. Volynsky we had no "real" philosophy, no "real" criticism. If we did know anything, we knew it in a muddle-headed, disorderly way. But now, thanks to Mr. Volynsky, we shall soon enrich our poor fund of knowledge and put it in order. Mr. Volynsky is a most reliable guide. Just see, for example, how well he solves "the fundamental question about Hegel's influence on Belinsky's world outlook".

"Growing and developing, Belinsky's thought, partly under the influence of Stankevich's circle and partly by independently reshaping impressions received from Nadezhdin's articles, quickly reached its height. The Schelling period ended for Belinsky in 1837 already, and Hegel's philosophy, as it reached him in conversations with friends and through articles in journals and translations, took the central place in his literary and intellectual activities. And here there emerges most clearly Belinsky's inability to draw independent logical conclusions in respect of political and civil questions from complex philosophical theorems. Systematic thinking did not come easily to Belinsky. He was greatly impressed by Hegel's teaching, but he did not have the strength to grasp this teaching in all its parts and conclusions. Hegel delighted his imagination, but did not stimulate his intellectual creation. To make a full study of the basic pro-

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\* А. Волюнский, «Русские критики», стр. 38. [A. Volynsky, *Russian Critics*, p. 38.]

positions of idealism it was necessary to possess patience. It was necessary to halt for a while the flight of the imagination and feelings, in order to give them new wings later. But Belinsky was incapable of searching quietly for the truth—and all his Hegelianism, as also his enthusiasm for Schelling in the form in which the latter was expounded by Nadezhdin, was bound to degenerate eventually into disorderly thinking, full of logical errors and strange reveries of a conciliatory, conservative nature.”\*

Thus, Mr. Volynsky is most surprised by Belinsky's temporary reconciliation with reality. He can explain it only by the fact that Belinsky did not understand Hegel properly. To tell the truth, this explanation is not a new one. It can be found also in Herzen's *My Past and Thoughts*, in I.S. Turgenev's reminiscences, and even in a letter from N. Stankevich to Neverov, written almost immediately after the appearance of the famous articles on Borodino and Menzel. To Mr. Volynsky belong only the malicious remarks about Belinsky's ignorance and the subtle hints at the indisputable and incomparable intellectual superiority of *him*, the “Promytheus of our day”, Mr. Volynsky.

At first glance the explanation given by Mr. Volynsky—it has several versions—seems perfectly satisfactory. Hegel said, “Was wirklich ist, das ist vernünftig”,\*\* and on this basis Belinsky hastened to proclaim as rational, and therefore as sacred and inviolable, all the very ugly Russian reality of that day and began to attack ardently all those who were dissatisfied with it. The articles in which he expressed these conciliatory views were “vile” articles, as the moderate and circumspect liberal Granovsky put it then. But Hegel was not to blame for them: his doctrine of the rational nature of all that is real has a special meaning of its own that was not understood by Belinsky who did not know German and did not possess the capacity for “pure thought”. Later, particularly under the influence of his move to St. Petersburg, he saw how gravely he had been mistaken; he became conscious of the true qualities of our reality and cursed his fatal errors. What could be simpler than that? The only trouble is that this simple explanation explains nothing at all.

Without going into an examination of all its versions, we shall remark that our present “advanced” patriae patres\*\*\* (namely, our revered sociologists) regard the articles on Borodino and Menzel in the same way as the father in the Bible should have regarded the “youthful errors” of his prodigal son: after magnanimously forgiving the brilliant critic for his “metaphysical” errors, “advanced” people reluctantly return to them, following the proverb: “Let bygones be bygones.” But this does not prevent them

\* A. Volynsky, *Russian Critics*, p. 90.

\*\* [All that is real is rational.]

\*\*\* [fathers of the fatherland]



from hinting, both opportunely and inopportunely, at the fact that they, "advanced" people, who have known all philosophical and sociological truth almost from the cradle, understand perfectly the full profundity of these errors and the full horror of the "fall" to which Belinsky's inappropriate and unwise, though fortunately only temporary, passion for "metaphysics" led him. Occasionally they also remind young writers, the disrespectful Koronats<sup>128</sup> of literature, who dare to doubt the correctness of our "advanced" catechism and turn to foreign sources with the aim of acquiring a better understanding of the questions that concern modern civilised mankind, of this fall. They tell these young writers: be careful, let this be an example to you....

And it sometimes happens that young writers are frightened by this example and turn from disrespectful Koronats into respectful ones and bid a mocking farewell to foreign "philosophical caps" and "progress" sensibly in accordance with our home-bred "formulas of progress". Thus, the example of Belinsky serves to strengthen the authority of our "revered sociologists".

According to one of these sociologists, Mr. Mikhailovsky, Belinsky remained merely a martyr to the truth all his life. He possessed remarkable talent as a literary critic. "Many years will pass, many critics and even critical devices will come and go, but some of Belinsky's aesthetic verdicts will remain totally valid. Yet it was in this sphere alone that Belinsky found an almost constant source of enjoyment for himself. As soon as an aesthetic phenomenon became complicated by philosophical and moral-political elements, his feeling for the truth let him down to some extent, while his thirst remained the same, and it was this that made him the martyr to the truth that he appears in his correspondence."\*

If Belinsky's feeling for the truth let him down each time an aesthetic phenomenon became complicated by philosophical and moral-political elements, it goes without saying that his period of enthusiasm for Hegelian philosophy fits in perfectly with this general rule. The whole of this period obviously arouses in Mr. Mikhailovsky nothing but compassionate concern for the "martyr to the truth" and perhaps also a sense of indignation with "metaphysics". His compassionate concern is accompanied by great respect. But the respect is *only* for Belinsky's sincerity, and as for the philosophical and "moral-political" ideas expressed by him at this time, Mr. Mikhailovsky regards them as nothing but nonsense.

This view of Belinsky's temporary reconciliation with reality is essentially the same as Mr. Volynsky's view quoted by us

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\* See the article "Proudhon and Belinsky" with which Mr. Pavlenkov adorns his edition of Belinsky's *Works*.

above. The only difference is that, in Mr. Mikhailovsky's opinion, the reconciliation "was induced by Hegel", whereas in Mr. Volynsky's opinion, borrowed by him from Stankevich, Herzen, Granovsky, Turgenev and others, Hegel had nothing to do with this reconciliation. But both of them—Mr. Volynsky and Mr. Mikhailovsky—are firmly convinced that Belinsky's conciliatory views are a terrible mistake.

However authoritative the opinion of these two fine men, one of whom is as knowledgeable in sociology as the other in philosophy, we venture to disagree with them. We believe that it was precisely during the conciliatory period of his development and precisely in the "moral-political" sphere that Belinsky expressed many ideas which are not only most worthy of a thinking being (as Byron puts it somewhere), but which merit to this very day the undivided attention of all those who wish to find a correct viewpoint for assessing the reality around us. In order to substantiate this theoretical view, we must begin in a somewhat round-about fashion.

## II

In 1764 in a letter to the Marquis Chauvelin Voltaire predicted the collapse of the old social order in France. "Ce sera un beau tapage," he added, "les jeunes gens sont heureux: ils verront de belles choses."\* Voltaire's prediction came true in the sense that the "tapage" really was a fine one; but one can say with confidence that it was not to the liking of many of the people who lived to see it and belonged to the same trend as the patriarch of Ferney. The patriarch did not regard the "mob" with favour, and it was the mob, for the most part, that produced the tapage of the end of the last century. True, for a time the behaviour of the mob corresponded perfectly to the views of "respectable people", i.e., the educated and liberal bourgeoisie. But little by little the mob let itself go to such an extent and became so disrespectful, daring and provocative that "respectable people" despaired and, feeling that they had been conquered by the wretched and unenlightened mob, began to doubt seriously the power of that very reason on behalf of which Voltaire and the Encyclopaedists acted and which it seemed should have placed at the helm of events its own bearers and representatives, i.e., the enlightened bourgeois. From 1793 all those who felt that they had been dislodged from their position and conquered by the unexpected and terrible victory of the "mob" began to lose faith in the power of reason. The events which followed with their constant wars and coups, in which military might prevailed

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\* [There will be a fine rumpus. Young people are fortunate: they will see some splendid things.]

time and time again over that which all enlightened people regarded as indisputable right, could only increase the disappointment that had begun: they seemed to mock the requirements of reason. And so we see that by the end of the eighteenth century faith in reason was at a very low ebb indeed, and although during the Consulate and Directory the so-called ideologists continued from force of habit to extol reason and truth (*la raison et la vérité*), they did so now entirely without their former enthusiasm, and their influence was negligible; they were not heeded by the public which, like Pontius Pilate, now asked with a sceptical smile: "What is truth?" Madame de Staël, who was well acquainted with the French intelligentsia of that time, says that the "majority" (*la plupart des hommes*), frightened by the terrible course of events, lost all desire for self-perfectionment and "overwhelmed by the power of chance, ceased to believe in the power of human abilities".\*

This disillusionment with the power of reason, by no means confined to France, found a spokesman, *inter alia*, in Byron. Manfred calls philosophy:

*...Of all our vanities the motliest,  
The merest word that ever fool'd the ear  
From out the schoolman's jargon.*

The socio-political events of his day seem to Byron to be the senseless and cruel pastime of "*Nemesis*", hostile to man, i.e., of the self-same *chance*. And at the same time his pride rebels against the rule of this blind force. The emotional content of Manfred, as Belinsky would have put it, is precisely the rebellion of the proud human spirit against blind "fate", its striving to overcome the dark forces of nature and history. Manfred partially solves this task by means of magic. But it goes without saying that it can be solved in this way only in the realm of fantasy.

The reason of the third estate, i.e., to be more precise, the common sense of the bourgeoisie which was striving to free itself from the oppression of the *ancien régime*, could not withstand

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\* *De la littérature considérée dans ses rapports avec les institutions sociales*. Introduction, p. XVIII. On page IV of the same Introduction she expresses herself even more strongly: "Les contemporains d'une révolution," she says, "perdent souvent tout intérêt à la recherche de la vérité. Tant d'événements décidés par la force, tant de crimes absous par le succès, tant de vertus flétries par le blâme, tant d'infortunes insultées par le pouvoir, tant de sentiments généreux devenus l'objet de la moquerie, tant de vils calculs philosophiquement commentés—tout lasse de l'espérance les hommes les plus fidèles au culte de la raison." ["The contemporaries of a revolution ... often lose all interest in the search for truth. So many events decided by force, so many crimes absolved by success, so many virtues stamped with abuse, so many misfortunes caused by power, so many generous sentiments become the object of mockery, so many vile calculations philosophically founded—all this saps the hope of those who are the most faithful to the cult of reason."]

the hard historical test that fell to its lot; it proved to be bankrupt, and the bourgeoisie itself became disillusioned with it. But whereas separate, albeit very numerous, individuals could be content with this disillusionment and even parade it, this was quite impossible for the class as a whole, for the whole *citoyen*\* third estate in its historical position at that time. The rapid, large-scale and capricious alternation of political events led social figures of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century to doubt the power of reason. The subsequent progress of these events was to give a new impetus to the development of social thought, to produce new attempts by thinking people to discover the hidden springs of social phenomena.

In France during the Restoration the centuries-old rivalry between the bourgeoisie and the aristocracy (secular and religious) was renewed with fresh force and in new socio-political conditions. In this struggle it was essential for each of the sides to be able to predict events to a certain extent at least. And although the vast majority of the fighters, as is the custom, put their trust in this respect merely in their "common sense" and "experience of life", among the bourgeoisie, which was still bursting with fresh strength at that time, there appeared already at the very beginning of the twenties many talented people who strove to conquer the force of blind chance by means of *scientific* prediction. This striving gave rise to talk of the need to create a social science; it also produced many fine scholars in the field of history. But the scientific study of phenomena is a matter for reason. Thus, the course of social development resurrected faith in reason, although it also confronted reason with new tasks, which were unknown or at least, little known to the "philosophers" of the eighteenth century.

The reason of that century was the reason of the "Enlighteners". The historical task of the Enlightenment was to evaluate given, historically inherited social relations, institutions and concepts from the viewpoint of new ideas engendered by new social requirements and relations. What had to be done at that time was to separate the sheep from the goats, the "truth" from "error", and as quickly and accurately as possible. Moreover it was quite unimportant to know where the given "error" had come from and how it had arisen and developed in history; what was important was to prove that it was an "error".

Anything that contradicted the new ideas was regarded as an error, just as everything that was in keeping with them was recognised as the truth, the eternal, absolute truth.

Civilised mankind has experienced several periods of Enlightenment. Each of them has its own individual traits, of course,

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\* [former]

but all of them are characterised by this distinctive generic feature: an intense struggle against old concepts in the name of new ideas which are regarded as eternal truths independent of any "accidental" historical conditions. The *reason of the enlightener* is nothing more nor less than the *common sense of the innovator* who closes his eyes to the historical course of human development and proclaims his own nature to be human nature in general, and his own philosophy to be the only true philosophy for all times and peoples.

It was this abstract common sense that was overthrown due to the tapage at the end of the eighteenth century. The tapage showed that in its historical movement mankind is subject to the operation, which it cannot understand, but which is nevertheless irresistible, of certain hidden forces that mercilessly destroy the power of "reason" (i.e., abstract common sense) whenever it comes into conflict with these forces.

A study of these hidden forces which first appeared in the form of the forces of blind "chance" had now become the more or less conscious aim of all scholars and thinkers engaged in the so-called moral and political sciences.\* The eighteenth century neglected history. Now everyone took it up. But to examine a phenomenon *historically* means to study it in *development*. The *viewpoint of development* gradually became prevalent in the philosophy and social science of the nineteenth century.

We know that the viewpoint of development yielded particularly rich fruit in German philosophy, i.e., in the philosophy of a country that was the contemporary of the leading European states *in theory only* (in the person of its thinkers) and was therefore able, without being distracted by practical struggle, to absorb quietly all the acquisitions of scientific thought and study carefully the causes and effects of the social movements taking place in the "West" (in den westlichen Ländern, as the Germans often put it then). The events which took place in France at the end of the eighteenth century enjoyed great sympathy among advanced people in Germany right up to 1793, the year which frightened the vast majority of these people and caused them to doubt the power of reason, as was the case with the enlightened French bourgeoisie. But German philosophy, which was then in splendid bloom, soon saw the way to conquer the blind force of chance. "*In freedom there must be necessity*," wrote Schelling in his *System des transcendentalen Idealismus* which

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\* This is expressed most clearly in Saint-Simon: "La science de l'homme n'a été jusqu'à présent qu'une science conjecturale," he says. "L'objet que je me suis proposé dans ce mémoire a été de lui imprimer le cachet de science d'observation" (*Mémoire sur la science de l'homme*). ["Up to the present the science of man has been only a conjectural science.... The aim which I have set myself in this essay was to set upon it the seal of a science of observation."]

appeared right at the beginning of the nineteenth century (in 1800). This means that freedom can only be the result of a certain *necessary*, i.e., *law-governed* historical development. Hence it follows that the study of the course of this law-governed development should be the paramount duty of all true friends of freedom. The nineteenth century is rich in all manner of great discoveries. One of the greatest is this view of *freedom* as the product of *necessity*.

What Schelling began was completed by Hegel, in whose system idealist German philosophy reached its glorious consummation. For Hegel world history was progress in the consciousness of freedom, but progress which we *must understand in its necessity*. For people who adhered to this view "history of mankind no longer appeared as a wild whirl of senseless deeds of violence, all equally condemnable at the judgement-seat of mature philosophic reason and which are best forgotten as quickly as possible, but as the process of evolution of man himself. It was now the task of the intellect to follow the gradual march of this process through all its devious ways, and to trace out the inner law running through all its apparently accidental phenomena" (Engels).<sup>129</sup>

To discover the laws under the influence of which the historical development of mankind takes place is to obtain the possibility of exerting a conscious influence on the process of this development and to change from the helpless plaything of "chance" into its master. Thus, German idealism opened up to thinking people extremely broad and most pleasing prospects: the power of chance was to give way to the victory of reason; necessity was to become the firm foundation of freedom. It is easy to imagine the delight with which these pleasing prospects were greeted by all those who were oppressed by sterile disillusionment and who deep down in their tormented hearts retained both an interest in social life and "a desire for self-perfectionment". Hegel's philosophy restored their faith in the power of human abilities, regenerated them for fresh intellectual activity, and in the flush of their new enthusiasm they believed that it would soon provide answers to all the great questions of knowledge and life, solve all contradictions and begin the new age of the conscious life of mankind. It was enthusiastically accepted by all that was fresh and thinking in Germany at that time, and, as we know, not in Germany alone.

### III

"The latest philosophy is the result of all earlier ones; nothing has been lost, all the principles have been preserved," Hegel said, concluding his lectures on the history of philosophy.... "A great deal of time had to pass before the philosophy of our day could appear.... That which we survey quickly in memory,

took place slowly in reality. Nevertheless the world spirit never stands still. It moves forward constantly, for its nature consists in this forward movement. It sometimes seems to stop and lose its eternal striving for self-cognition. But it only seems to do so. In fact at that time there is taking place within it a profound inner work which is imperceptible until the results achieved by it are revealed, until the crust of obsolete views flies into dust and the spirit itself, rejuvenated afresh, moves forwards with its gigantic strides. Hamlet exclaimed, addressing his father's ghost: 'Old mole! Canst thou work i' th' earth so fast?' The same may be said of the world spirit: 'it works fast.'

The author of *My Past and Thoughts* called Hegel's philosophy the algebra of progress.<sup>130</sup> The aptness of this comment is fully borne out by those views of the great thinker's which we have just quoted. Idealist philosophy, which proclaimed enthusiastically that the nature of the world spirit consisted in constant movement forward, could not be a philosophy of stagnation. But at times Hegel expressed himself even more decisively. As an example let us take the passage in the lectures on the history of philosophy where he talks about the trial of Socrates.

In Hegel's opinion, the spread of Socrates' views threatened to bring about a total collapse of the old structure of Athenian life. Therefore the Athenians cannot be blamed if, sensing that the thinker on trial by them was the mortal enemy of their beloved social order, they sentenced him to death. This is not enough: it must be said bluntly that they *were obliged* to defend this social order. But it must also be admitted that Socrates was right for his part. He was the conscious representative of a *new, higher* principle; he was a hero who had the absolute right of the spirit on his side. "Such is the position in world history of heroes who, in creating a new world by their activity, come into conflict with the old order and destroy it: they are violators of the existing laws. Therefore they perish, but they perish as individuals; their punishment does not destroy the principle they represent ... the principle triumphs afterwards, albeit in a different form."

Historical movement frequently presents us with spectacles of the hostile collision of two principles of right. One right is the divine right of the existing social order and established moral relations; the other is the equally divine right of self-consciousness, science and subjective freedom. Their collision is a tragedy in the full sense of the word, a tragedy in which people perish without being guilty: each side is right in its own way.

This is what Hegel said. The reader can see that in essence his philosophy was indeed a real algebra of progress, although this was not always realised by the progressives of his day. Some were confused by his terminology which was incomprehensible

to the layman. The famous thesis *all that is real is rational, all that is rational is real* was taken by some to be the philosophical expression of the most intransigent conservatism. Generally speaking, this was a mistake. According to Hegel's logic, by no means everything that exists is real. Reality is higher than existence (*"die Wirklichkeit steht höher als die Existenz"*). Chance existence is not real existence. Reality is *necessary*: "reality unfolds as necessity". But we have already seen that, according to Hegel, not only that which already exists is necessary: by its constant mole-like work the world spirit undermines that which exists, turns it into simple form void of real content and makes necessary the emergence of the new, that clashes fatally with the old.

The nature of the world spirit consists in eternal striving forwards. Therefore in social life also it is only continuous forward movement, only the constant, more or less rapid collapse of all that is old and obsolete, that is necessary and rational in the final analysis. This conclusion is inevitably suggested by the whole character and meaning of Hegel's philosophy as a *dialectical* system.

But Hegel's philosophy was *not only a dialectical system*, it declared itself to be *also a system of absolute truth*. But if absolute truth *has already been found*, the aim of the world spirit—self-cognition—*has already been achieved*, and its movement forward becomes meaningless. Thus, the claim to possess absolute truth was bound to put Hegel at variance with his own dialectic and make him hostile to the further development of philosophy. But this is still not all. It was bound to make him conservative with respect to social life as well. According to his teaching, all philosophy is the ideal expression of its time (*ihre Zeit in Gedanken erfasst*). If he had found absolute truth, this means that he was living in an age to which an "absolute" social order corresponded, i.e., an order which is the objective expression of the absolute truth found in the theory. And since absolute truth cannot become out of date and thereby turn into error, it is clear that all striving to change the order that expresses it is a gross sacrilege, an audacious revolt against the world spirit. Of course, even in this "absolute" order it is possible to make some individual improvements that will eliminate isolated imperfections left by the past. But in general this order must remain as eternal and unshakeable as the absolute truth which it objectively expresses is eternal and unshakeable.

A profound thinker and a brilliant mind of the first half of the nineteenth century, Hegel was nevertheless the son of his day and his country. Whereas Germany's social position was conducive to a quiet theoretical study of the course of world events, it was very uncondusive to the *practical* application of the results.



obtained by theory. In the practical respect the bold German theoreticians often remained the most peaceful philistines. There was also a considerable amount of philistinism in such great men as Goethe and Hegel. In his youth Hegel sympathised strongly with the Great French Revolution, but with time his love of freedom grew weaker and the desire to live at peace with the existing order of things became stronger, so that the July Revolution of 1830 made a painful impression on him. One of the "Left" Hegelians, the famous Arnold Ruge, subsequently reproached his teacher's philosophy for always confining itself to the *contemplation* of phenomena, without striving at all to go over to *action* and for the fact that while proclaiming freedom to be the great aim of historical development, in practice it got along peacefully with the most blatant slavery. It must be admitted that these are just reproaches, that Hegel's philosophy did contain the shortcomings mentioned. These shortcomings, which were expressed, *inter alia*, in the claim to possess absolute truth, can also be found in the lectures on the history of philosophy, which contain the ideas outlined above, full of steadfast and robust striving ahead. Thus, Hegel attempts to prove that in modern society—as opposed to ancient society—philosophical activity can and should confine itself to the "inner world", the world of ideas, because the "outer world" (social relations) has now arrived at a certain rational order, "calmed down" and "become reconciled with itself" (*ist so mit sich versöhnt worden*). But most strongly of all the conservative aspect of Hegel's views made itself felt in his *Philosophie des Rechts*. Anyone who reads this work carefully will be struck by the brilliant profundity of many of the ideas expressed in it. And at the same time he will see that here more than anywhere else Hegel tries to reconcile his philosophy with Prussian conservatism. Most instructive in this respect is the famous Introduction in which the teaching on rational reality acquires an entirely different meaning from that which it had in the *Logic*.

That which exists, exists by virtue of necessity. To understand the necessity of a given phenomenon is to discover its rationality. The process of scientific cognition consists in the fact that the spirit, which strives for self-cognition, recognises itself, its own reason, in that which exists. Philosophy should understand that which is. In particular, the science of law should understand the rationality of the state. Hegel is very far from any intention of "*constructing the state as it should be*". Such constructions are absurd: the world "*as it should be*" does not exist or, rather, exists only in a given personal opinion, and personal opinion is a "soft element", that yields easily to personal arbitrariness and often alters under the influence of caprice or vanity. He who has understood reality and discovered the reason concealed within it does

not rebel against it, but becomes reconciled with it\* and rejoices at it. He does not renounce his own subjective freedom; but it shows itself *not in discord, but in harmony* with what exists. In general discord with what exists, disharmony between cognising reason and reason that is embodied in reality, is produced only by an insufficient understanding of this reality, by errors in abstract thinking. Man is a thinking being; in thought lies his freedom, his right, the foundation of all morality. But there are people in whose eyes only thought which disagrees with everything that is universally recognised is free. With such people the noble and divine right of thought turns into a lack of right. These people are prepared to sacrifice everything to arbitrariness of their personal judgment. They regard a law which places a certain *obligation* on a person merely as a *dead, cold letter*, merely as a *fetter* on subjective conviction. They take pride in their negative attitude to reality, whereas it testifies only to weakness of thought and to their total inability to sacrifice the caprice of personal judgment for the sake of common interests. It was said long ago that whereas semi-knowledge weakens belief in God, true knowledge, on the contrary, strengthens it. The same may also be said of people's attitude to the reality around them: semi-knowledge incites them against it; true knowledge reconciles them with it. Thus Hegel reasons here!\*\*

It is perfectly true that the science of law should not concern itself with "the state as it should be"; its task is to understand what is and what has been, to explain the historical development of state institutions. Hegel was quite right in attacking those superficial liberals (we would say subjectivists today) who, unable to link their "ideals" with the development of the reality around them, remain forever in the sphere of helpless and impractical subjective day-dreaming. But it is not only such liberalism that Hegel attacks. He objects to all progressive striving that does not come from official spheres. Moreover, here he regards as necessary, and therefore also "rational", "all that exists" for the simple reason that it does exist. A revolt against that which exists is declared to be a revolt against reason. All this is sup-

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\* We would ask the reader to note that the expression "reconciliation with reality" (die Versöhnung mit der Wirklichkeit) was used by Hegel himself.

\*\* It is interesting to compare this view belonging to the greatest of the German idealists with a view expressed by his contemporary, the brilliant Frenchman Saint-Simon. "Le philosophe ... n'est pas seulement observateur, il est acteur, il est acteur du premier genre dans le monde moral, car ce sont ses opinions sur ce que le monde doit devenir qui règlent la société humaine" (*Travail sur la gravitation universelle*). ["The philosopher ... is not only an observer, he is an actor; he is an actor of the first rank in the moral world, because it is his opinions on what the world should become that rule human society."]

ported by arguments which are worlds apart from the above-mentioned discussions on the fate of Socrates and on the divine right of self-cognition and subjective freedom. From a thinker who meditates carefully on the historical development of mankind and comes to the conclusion that movement forward constitutes the nature of the world spirit, Hegel turns into an irritable and suspicious protector, ready to shout for help at every new attempt of the mighty and eternal "mole" who is implacably undermining the edifice of old concepts and institutions.

From this it follows that if Hegel's teaching on the rationality of all that is real was completely misunderstood by many, the blame for this rests first and foremost with Hegel himself since he gave it a very strange, *quite undialectical* interpretation and proclaimed the Prussian social order of that day to be the embodiment of reason. This is why it may seem strange that Hegel's philosophy did not lose its influence on thinking people of that time. But strange though it may be, the fact remains: the revolt against the conservative conclusions drawn by Hegel from his—essentially quite progressive—philosophy did not begin until much later; at the time of the appearance of the *Philosophie des Rechts* only a few superficial liberals were against Hegel, and all serious, young and energetic people followed him with enthusiasm, in spite of his contradictions and without even noticing them. This is explained, of course, by the backwardness of social life in Germany at that time. But in the previous century, in the age of Lessing, this life was even more backward, yet the philosophical concepts that prevailed at that time were quite unlike Hegel's; if Hegel had been able to appear at that time most probably no one would have followed him. Why so? Because "sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof" and because only the nineteenth century has confronted thinking mankind with the great task to which Hegel's philosophy promised to give the answer: *the scientific study of reality, the scientific explanation of the historical development of mankind in the social, political and intellectual aspects as a necessary and therefore law-governed process.* We have already said that only such an understanding of history could eliminate the pessimistic view of it as the realm of blind chance. Therefore wherever the underground work of the "world spirit" was being carried on even to the slightest extent, wherever the "mole" was preparing the ground for new social movements, young minds were bound to throw themselves avidly into the study of Hegelian philosophy. And the more serious the demands of theoretical thought were in the young heads, the stronger the desire for personal self-sacrifice on behalf of common interests was in the young hearts, the more resolute their passion for Hegelianism was bound to be and really was. The revolt against the conservative conclusions drawn by Hegel which began later

was perfectly justified. But it must not be forgotten that in the theoretical sense this revolt was justified only in so far as it itself rested on Hegel's dialectic, i.e., mainly on the explanation of history as a law-governed process and on the understanding of freedom as the result of necessity.

#### IV

We can now return to Belinsky.

In embarking on the history of his intellectual development, let us remark first of all that in early youth he revolted strongly against Russian reality of that day. We know that the tragedy which he wrote while at university and which caused him so much trouble was an ardent, although not very artistic protest against serfdom. Belinsky was totally on the side of the serfs.

"Surely these people are not born merely in order to serve the whims of people like themselves?" exclaims one of his heroes. "Who gave this pernicious right to some people to enslave the will of other beings like themselves, to take away their sacred treasure—freedom? Who permits them to abuse the rights of nature and mankind?... Merciful Lord, Father of all men, tell me: is it your wise hand that brought into the world these serpents, these crocodiles, these tigers who feed upon the bones and flesh of their kin and drink their blood and tears like water?"<sup>131</sup>

In its ardour this tirade would do honour to Karl Moor himself. And Belinsky was indeed very strongly influenced by Schiller's early works: *The Robbers*, *Cabal and Love*, and *Fiesco*.<sup>\*</sup> As he himself said, these dramas aroused in him "wild hostility towards social order in the name of an abstract ideal of society, divorced from geographical and historical conditions of development and built on thin air". Incidentally, it was not only the above-mentioned works by Schiller that affected him in this way. "Don Carlos," he said, "cast me into abstract heroism, apart from which I despised everything ... and in which, in spite of my unnatural and intense rapture, I was conscious of being completely insignificant. *The Maid of Orleans*<sup>\*\*</sup> plunged me into the same abstract heroism, the same empty, impersonal, substantial Generality, without any individual definition." We earnestly beg the reader to take note of this interesting comment by the famous critic concerning himself. His youthful enthusiasm for an "abstract ideal of society" is a highly important stage in the history of his intellectual development, which to this very day has not attracted all the attention it deserves. Thus, no one, to the best of our knowledge, has emphasised the fact that when

\* [Die Räuber, Kabale und Liebe, Fiesco.]

\*\* [Die Jungfrau von Orleans.]

this talented and ardent young man was full of "abstract heroism", he was at the same time "*conscious of being completely insignificant*". This consciousness is extremely painful. It was bound to arouse, on the one hand, equally painful doubts as to the validity of the *abstract ideal*, and on the other hand, attempts to find *concrete* ground for his social aspirations. The painful consciousness of being "completely insignificant" was not characteristic of Belinsky alone at that time. Shortly before this the aspirations of the advanced intelligentsia of the twenties had been cruelly dashed, and sorrow and despair reigned among thinking people.\* It has often been said here that Nadezhdin had a great influence on the formation of Belinsky's views, at least during the first period of his development. But was there anything particularly comforting in the views of Nadezhdin himself? For him old Russian life was "a dense forest of faceless names jostling in the emptiness of lifeless chaos"; he even doubted whether we had lived throughout the thousand years of Russia's existence. Our intellectual life begins only with Peter, and even now "everything European comes (to us) on the rebound, over thousands of leaps and breaks and therefore reaches us as faint, dying echoes".

"Until now our literature has been a European *corvée*, if one might put it like that; it has been wrought by Russian hands in an un-Russian way; it has exhausted the fresh inexhaustible juices of the young Russian spirit in order to cultivate alien, foreign fruits."\*\*

This almost rings of Chaadayev. In his famous first article "*Literary Reveries*" Belinsky expressed what appears to be a fairly optimistic view of our future, if not our past and present. After remarking that for the time being what we need is not literature, which will appear in good time, but enlightenment, he exclaims:

"And this enlightenment will not stagnate, thanks to the vigilant care of our wise government. The Russian people is clever and quick, diligent and ardent towards all that is good and fine, when the hand of its father, the tsar, points to the goal, when his powerful voice summons the people to that goal..."

The mere institution of an estate of domestic tutors should, according to him, work real miracles in respect of enlightenment. In addition, our nobility has finally become convinced of the need to give its children a good education, and our merchant estate "is quickly forming and approaching the upper estate

\* On this see Herzen, *Du développement, etc.*, Paris, 1851, pp. 97-98.

\*\* Not having Nadezhdin's articles at hand, we have been obliged to quote from Mr. Рупин's book: «Белинский, его жизнь и переписка» [*Belinsky, His Life and Correspondence*], Vol. I, p. 95. It need hardly be added that we borrow most of the information concerning the history of Belinsky's intellectual development from this work. We merely arrange the information differently.

in this respect". In short, the business of enlightenment is making good progress here: "at the present time seeds are maturing for the future".

All this was, of course, written quite sincerely: at the time when Belinsky wrote his article he wanted to believe and, in the ardour of his writer's enthusiasm, did believe that enlightenment would soon spread over Russia. But in his calmer moments, when the heat of enthusiasm cooled down, he could not help seeing that the foundations on which his belief in the rapid development of enlightenment in Russia rested, were shaky to say the least. And could the successes of enlightenment—however "quick"—satisfy a man "hostile towards a social order" in the name of an ideal and imbued with "abstract heroism".... Such a person needed prospects of a different kind. In short, the rapturous tone of "Literary Reveries" was the fruit of a momentary outburst and by no means excluded in their author a distressing state of mind resulting from his painful feeling of being completely insignificant and the unsolved contradiction between the abstract ideal, on the one hand, and concrete Russian reality, on the other.

In July 1836 Belinsky went to the village of B...kh in Tver Gubernia and there with the help of one of his hospitable hosts, the well-known "dilettante philosopher", or "philosophical friend", M. B., became acquainted—for the first time, if we are not mistaken—with the philosophy of Fichte. "I grasped the Fichtean view with energy, with fanaticism," he says. And this is understandable. As he put it, in his eyes life had always been divided into the ideal life and the real life; Fichte convinced him that "the ideal life is the real, positive, concrete life, and the so-called real life is negation, an illusion, nothingness, emptiness". Thus, the painful contradiction between the abstract ideal and concrete reality received the sought-after philosophical solution: it was solved by reducing to naught one of the aspects of the antinomy.

*After announcing that reality was an illusion*, Belinsky was able to fight all the more strongly against it on behalf of the *ideal*, which now turned out to be the only reality worthy of the name. In this "Fichtean" period Belinsky was very sympathetic towards the French. "We were told about an occasion in Belinsky's life at that time," says Mr. Pypin, "when he was in high-ranking company, which he did not know at all, and in a conversation on the French events at the end of the last century expressed an opinion which embarrassed the host by its extreme sharpness."\* Later in a letter to a friend Belinsky recalled the episode and added:

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\* *Belinsky*, Vol. I, p. 175.

"I do not regret having used this phrase in the slightest and am not in the slightest embarrassed by the recollection of it: with it I expressed most conscientiously and with all the fullness of my impetuous nature my spiritual state at that time. Yes, I thought so at that time.... With that phrase I expressed sincerely and conscientiously the tense spiritual state through which I had to pass of necessity."

Now, it would seem, Belinsky could rest from the doubts which had tormented him. In fact, however, he now suffered almost more than before.

Firstly, he began to doubt his own capacity for philosophical thinking. "And I learned of the existence of this concrete life in order to realise that I was incapable of acquiring it for myself; I learned of paradise in order to assure myself that only approaching its gates, not enjoyment, but only a foretaste of its harmony and its aromas was the only life possible for me."

Secondly, the negation of reality evidently did not relieve him of his old *theoretical doubts* for long. Real life had been proclaimed as illusory, paltry and empty. But there are illusions and illusions. French reality was, according to Belinsky's new point of view, as illusory as any other, i.e., Russian included. But French social life contained phenomena with which, as we already know, he warmly sympathised, and in Russia there was nothing of the kind. Why were the French "illusions" unlike our own?

"Fichteanism" did not provide an answer to this question, which was actually only a simple modification of the old agonising question as to why concrete reality contradicts the abstract ideal and how this contradiction can be eliminated. It turned out that declaring reality to be an illusion did not in fact help in the slightest, and consequently the new philosophical viewpoint itself appeared dubious, if not quite "*illusory*": for it was valuable to Belinsky precisely in so far as it apparently promised to give simple and convincing answers to the questions which troubled him.

Later, in one of his letters (June 20, 1838), Belinsky expressed the conviction that he "*hated thought*". "Yes, I hate [it], as an abstraction," he wrote. "But can it really be acquired without being abstract, should one really think always only in a moment of revelation, and not think of anything the rest of the time? I understand the complete absurdity of such an assumption, but my nature is hostile to thinking." These ingenuous, moving lines characterise best of all Belinsky's attitude to philosophy. He could not be content with "abstractions". The only thing that could satisfy him was a system which, itself proceeding from social life and itself being explained by that life, would in its turn explain that life and make it possible to exert an

extensive and fruitful influence upon it. Herein lay his imaginary hatred for thought: he did not, of course, hate philosophical thinking in general, but only the sort of thinking that was content with philosophical "contemplation" and turned its back on life. "At that time we were searching in philosophy for everything but pure thought," says Turgenev. This is quite right, particularly in relation to Belinsky. He was searching in philosophy for the road to happiness, as Byron's Cain put it, and, of course, not to personal happiness, but to the happiness of his neighbours, the good of his country. On this basis many imagined that he really did not possess any "philosophical talent" and even people who in terms of ability for philosophical thinking were not fit to tie his shoe-laces, began to look down on him with a certain condescending approval. These complacent gentlemen forgot or did not know that during Belinsky's time almost the whole of thinking Europe was searching in philosophy for the road to social happiness. This is why philosophy was of such vast social significance at that time. Now that the road to happiness is pointed out *no longer by philosophy*, its progressive significance is tantamount to naught and lovers of "pure thought" can engage in it as much as they like. We wish them success with all our heart, but this does not prevent us from holding a different opinion concerning Belinsky's "philosophical talent". We believe that he had a *tremendous feeling for theoretical truth*, which unfortunately had not been developed by a systematic philosophical education, but which nevertheless pointed out to him with unflinching accuracy the most important tasks of social science at that time. "Belinsky was one of the highest philosophical organisations that I have ever encountered in life," said one of the most educated Russians of the time, Prince Odoyevsky. We believe that Belinsky was one of the highest "philosophical organisations" that has ever entered the field of literature in our country.

Be that as it may, the cursed questions gave Belinsky no peace throughout the whole of the "Fichtean period". They were the very questions to which the German poet demanded an answer in his splendid poem:

*Wherefore bends the Just One, bleeding  
'Neath the cross's weight laborious,  
While upon his steed the Wicked  
Rides all-proudly and victorious?  
Wherein lies the fault? It is not  
That our God is not almighty?  
Or hath he himself offended?  
Such a thought seems wild and flighty.\**

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\* [We are quoting from *The Poems of Heine*, Lnd., 1878, p. 514.]



Modern social science has solved these questions once and for all. It has recognised that as yet by no means everything on earth is accessible to "the power of truth", and it has explained why "truth" still means so little in our social (particularly inter-class) relations. From the point of view of modern social science the questions which worried and tormented Belinsky may seem rather naive.

But they were anything but naive in his day; the best minds of his age were preoccupied with them. They proceed logically from the basic question as to why chance so often proves to be stronger than reason. And it is easy to understand that Belinsky could be content only with a philosophy that would give him "simple" and firm answers to precisely these questions.

Why can crude material force mock with impunity the best, noblest human strivings? Why do some peoples flourish and others perish, falling into the hands of stern conquerors? Is it because the conquerors are always better and higher than the conquered? This can hardly be so. Very often it happens only because the conquerors have more soldiers than the conquered. But in that case what justifies this triumph of force? And what can be the significance of "ideals" that never leave their realm above the stars and abandon our poor practical life as a sacrifice to all manner of horrors? Whether you call these ideals *abstract* and reality *concrete*, or on the contrary, declare reality to be an abstraction and ideals to be reality, you will be compelled in either case to consider these questions, unless you possess the "philosophical talent" of Wagner,<sup>132</sup> i.e., unless you are absorbed in "pure thought", or you belong to the *decadents* who are capable of amusing themselves with pathetic "*formulas of progress*" that solve nothing and disturb nobody. Belinsky, as we know, was neither a Wagner nor a decadent. And this, of course, does him great credit; but he paid a very high price for this credit. His "Fichtean period" was later called by him a period of *decline*. Obviously he was bound to try and get out of this painful condition. And equally obviously this striving was bound to lead to a break with the philosophy of Fichte.

Unfortunately, because of insufficient data, the history of this break has not yet been fully studied. We know, however, that by the middle of 1837 Belinsky was already strongly influenced by Hegel, although he had only had time to acquaint himself with certain parts of Hegel's system. We also know that by this time he had already become reconciled with the reality towards which he had been so hostile before. Considerable light is thrown on his mood at that time by a letter from Pyatigorsk which he wrote to a young friend on August 7, 1837. He strongly advises him to study philosophy. "Only in philosophy will you find answers to your soul's questions, only it will give peace and

harmony to your soul and grant you such happiness of which the crowd does not even dream and which the outer life can neither give you nor take away from you. You will not be in the world, the whole world will be in you.... Above all, leave politics and fear all kinds of political influence on your way of thinking." In Russia politics has no meaning at all, because for Russia "a completely different destiny has been prescribed than for France where the political trend of the sciences, and the arts, and the character of the inhabitants has its own meaning, its validity and its good side". All hope for Russia lies in the spread of enlightenment and in the moral self-perfectionment of her citizens. "If each of the individuals who make up Russia were to reach perfection by way of love, Russia would become the happiest country in the world without any politics." This is not an Hegelian view at all, of course, but we have already said that at that time Belinsky's acquaintance with Hegel was most incomplete. For us it is important that Belinsky arrived at a reconciliation with *Russian reality* by way of an *explanation of its historical development*, albeit an incorrect and in general extremely superficial explanation. Why does our social life differ from French social life? Because the historical destiny of Russia differs from the historical destiny of France. Such an answer made any parallels between Russia and France impossible. And such parallels even a short time ago were bound to lead Belinsky to painful and almost despairing conclusions. At the same time such an answer made possible a reconciliation not only with our Russian, but also with French social life—for example, with the events of the end of the eighteenth century, for which Belinsky only a short time ago had felt most ardent sympathy: everything is good in its proper place. And we have seen that he justifies the "political trend" of the French. Incidentally, in his enthusiasm for the "absolute" truth of German philosophy he no longer respects this trend. The French have "no eternal truths, but daily truths, i.e., new truths for each day. They want to deduce everything, not from the eternal laws of human reason, but from experience, from history". This angers Belinsky to such an extent that he dispatches "to the devil" the French, whose influence has never brought us anything but harm, to quote him, and declares Germany to be the Jerusalem of modern mankind, to which the eyes of all thinking young Russians should be turned in hope and trust.

Anyone who took Belinsky to be a *protector* who "became reconciled" with Russian reality would be greatly mistaken, however. At that time too he was still very far from conservatism. Peter the Great appeals to him precisely because of his decisive break with the order of things that existed in his day. "The tsars of all peoples developed their peoples by relying on the past, on tradi-

tion; Peter severed Russia from the past, destroying her tradition." It must be agreed that such speeches would be very strange in the mouth of a protector. In the same way he is not at all inclined to idealise the Russian life of his day; he finds that it contains many imperfections, but he explains these imperfections by Russia's youth: "Russia is still a child that still needs a nanny in whose bosom there beats a heart full of love for her charge and in whose hand there is a rod ready to punish it for being naughty." He even reconciles himself to serfdom now, but only for a while, only because he regards the Russian people as insufficiently mature for freedom. To quote his words, "the government is liberating them by degrees", and this fact also pleases him, as does the fact that, due to the absence of primogeniture in our country, our nobility "dies out on its own, without any revolutions and internal upheavals". True protectors took an entirely different view of things, and if any of them had read the letter by Belinsky quoted by us, they would have found that it was full of the most "nonsensical ideas" in spite of its negative attitude towards politics. And this would be quite right from the "protective" point of view. Belinsky reconciled himself not to reality, but to the sad fate of his abstract ideal.

Only a short time ago he had suffered in the knowledge that this ideal would find no application in life. Now he rejects it, convinced that it is incapable of leading to anything but "abstract heroism", sterile hostility to reality. But this does not mean that Belinsky is turning his back on progress. Certainly not. It merely means that now he is proposing to serve it differently from before. "We shall imitate the Apostles of Christ," he exclaims, "who did not plot and did not found any open or secret political societies in spreading the teaching of their divine teacher, but who did not deny him before emperors and judges and feared neither fire nor sword. Do not meddle in matters that do not concern you, but be loyal to your cause, and your cause is love of the truth.... To hell with politics, long live science!"

## V

A negative attitude to "politics", however, by no means solved the question of why evil so often triumphs over good, force over law, falsehood over truth. And as long as this question remained unsolved, the moral gain from "reconciliation" was still small, since Belinsky was assailed by doubts as before. But now he was convinced that Hegel's system would help him get rid of them for ever. His further acquaintance with this system was assisted by the same "dilettante philosopher" who had expounded Fichte's teaching to him. How strong the effect of Hegel's philosophy was on Belinsky and precisely what spiritual needs of his it met

can be seen from the following passage in his letter to Stankevich:

"I came to Moscow from the Caucasus, B. (the "dilettante philosopher") also arrived, and we lived together. In the summer he looked through Hegel's philosophy of religion and law. A new world opened up to us. Force is right and right is force;—No, I cannot tell you with what feeling I heard these words. It was liberation. I understood the idea of the fall of kingdoms, the legality of the conquerors. I understood that there is no crude material force, no dominion of the bayonet and sword, no arbitrariness, no chance—and my guardianship of the human race ended, and the significance of my fatherland appeared to me in a new form.... Before this K...v (Katkov) had conveyed to me, to the best of his ability, and I had absorbed, to the best of my ability, some results of the *Aesthetics*.—My God! What a new, bright, infinite world!... The word 'reality' became for me equivalent to the word 'God'. And you are wrong to advise me to look more often at the blue sky—the image of the infinite—to avoid lapsing into kitchen reality: my friend, blessed is he who can see in the image of the blue sky a symbol of the infinite, but the sky is often covered with grey clouds, so more blessed is he who can brighten even the kitchen with the idea of the infinite."

Now Belinsky's real reconciliation with reality took place. A man who strives to brighten even the kitchen with the idea of the infinite will not, of course, want to alter anything in the life around him. He will delight in the consciousness and contemplation of its rationality, and the more he worships reason, the more incensed he will be by any criticism of reality. It is easy to see that Belinsky's passionate nature was bound to take him very far in this respect. It is hard now to even believe that he delighted in contemplating the reality around him, like an artist delights in the spectacle of a great work of art. "Such is my nature," he said: "my spirit absorbs love, and hostility, and knowledge, and all thought, all feeling with great effort, *sorrow and difficulty*; but once having absorbed them, it becomes totally infused with them, to its innermost and deepest recesses. Thus in the crucible of my spirit the significance of the great word *reality* developed independently.... I look upon reality so despised by me earlier and I thrill with secret rapture when I realise its rationality, when I see that nothing can be thrown out of it and nothing in it can be abused and rejected.... *Reality!* I repeat, getting up and going to sleep, day and night, and reality surrounds me, I feel it everywhere and in everything, even in myself, in this *new* change, which is becoming more perceptible each day."

This "secret" rapture at rational reality reminds one of the rapture felt in communion with nature by people who are able to enjoy simultaneously both its beauty and the consciousness

of their indivisible unity with it. A person who loves nature with such a philosophical and at the same time poetic love follows all the manifestations of its life with equal satisfaction. In precisely this way Belinsky too now regards everything that surrounds him with the same loving interest. "Yes, reality leads one into reality," he exclaims. "Regarding each man not according to a previously prepared theory, but according to the facts which he himself presents, I am beginning to be able to establish a proper relationship with him, and therefore everyone is pleased with me and I am pleased with everyone. I am beginning to find in conversations common interests with people with whom I never thought I had anything in common." Having obtained a post in a land-surveying institute, he is extremely pleased with his modest, yet useful activity as a teacher. "It is with insatiable curiosity that I examine these means, outwardly so crude, commonplace and *prosaic*, which create this benefit, inconspicuous, insignificant if one does not follow its development in time, imperceptible to the superficial glance, but great and salutary in its consequences for society. As long as I have the strength, I shall do all I can to lay my mite on the altar of the public good."

There is no trace of "abstract heroism" now. Exhausted by his previous thinking, Belinsky seems to lose even a theoretical interest in the great social questions. He is prepared to be content with an instinctive consciousness of the rationality of the life around him. "Knowledge of reality consists in a kind of instinct, tact," he says, "in consequence of which every step by a person is right, every attitude is proper, and all relations with other people are correct, unstrained.... Naturally, he who adds to this instinctual penetration a conscious one through thought, will possess reality twofold, but the main thing is to know it, in one way or another."

In the preceding period of his development Belinsky tried, as we have seen, to solve the contradiction that tormented him between the abstract ideal and concrete reality by reducing one of the aspects of this antinomy to naught; he declared all reality that contradicted the *ideal* to be an *illusion*. Now he is doing precisely the opposite: now he is reducing the other aspect of the antinomy to naught, i.e., declaring any *ideal* that contradicts *reality* to be an *illusion*. Theoretically, of course, this new solution is as incorrect as the first one: in neither case are there sufficient grounds for reducing one of the aspects of the antinomy to naught. Nevertheless the new phase in Belinsky's philosophical development is a tremendous step forward compared with the preceding one.

In order to understand its importance fully, we must consider the article on the Battle of Borodino.<sup>133</sup>

The main interest of this article lies in the struggle with the rationalistic view of social life and in the elucidation of the

relationship of individuals to society as a whole. The rationalistic view, with which Belinsky appears to have got along quite well during his Fichtean period, now seems to him to be extremely foolish, worthy only of French chatterboxes and liberal abbots. "From the times about which we know only from history up to our day there is not and never has been a people which was made up and constituted by a mutual conscious agreement of a certain number of men who have expressed the desire to be part of it, or in accordance with the idea of any particular person, however brilliant." Let us take the origin of the monarchy. The liberal chatterbox would say that it appeared as a result of the depravity of people who, convinced of their inability to rule themselves, recognised the bitter need to subject themselves to the will of a single person, whom they themselves elected and invested with unlimited power. "To the superficial gaze of *abstract* thinkers, in whose eyes ideas and phenomena do not contain within themselves their own cause and necessity, but grow up, like mushrooms after the rain, not only without soil and roots, but in the air, for such thinkers there is nothing simpler and more satisfying than this explanation; but for people whose spiritual vision discerns the depth and inner essence of things, there can be nothing more absurd, ridiculous and senseless. Everything that has no cause within itself and comes from some alien 'outside', and not from 'inside' itself, all this lacks rationality and, consequently, sacredness. Fundamental state decrees are sacred because they are the basic ideas not of a particular people, but of each people, and also because, after turning into phenomena, becoming fact, they developed dialectically in historical movement, so that their very changes are elements of their own idea. And for this reason fundamental decrees are not law invented by man, but appear, so to say, *before time* and are merely articulated and recognised by man."

Here we find a certain clumsiness in the use of philosophical terms. Thus, for example, from the passage quoted it emerges that, in Belinsky's opinion, the philosopher can see the *inner essence of things*. But what is this *inner essence*? To our mind, Goethe was quite right when he said:

*Nichts ist innen, Nichts ist aussen,  
Was ist drinnen, das ist draussen.\**

But we shall not dwell on details. We must remind the reader of the general character of Belinsky's views at that time.

What from his new viewpoint is the role of individuals in the dialectical process of social development?

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\* [Nothing's in and nothing's out,  
What's within is yet without.]

"Man is particular and accidental in his personality, but general and necessary in spirit, which is expressed by his personality," says Belinsky. "Hence the duality of his position and his strivings: his struggle between his *self* and that which is outside his *self*, which is his *non-self*.... In order to be a real person, and not an illusion, he should be a *particular expression of the general* or a *finite* manifestation of the infinite. In consequence of this he should renounce his subjective individuality, recognising it as falsehood and an illusion, and should acquiesce in that which is universal, general, recognising that alone as truth and reality. But since this *universal* or *general* is to be found not in him, but in the objective world, he should become linked, merged with it, in order later, having assimilated the objective world into his own subjective possession, to become again a subjective individual, but now a real one, expressing not chance particularity, but the general, the universal—in a word, to become spirit incarnate."

In order not to be an illusion, man should become a particular expression of the general. The most progressive world outlook is compatible with this view of the individual. When Socrates attacked the old-fashioned concepts of the Athenians, he was serving the "general, universal", his philosophical preaching was an ideal expression of the new step taken by Athens in its historical development. And for this reason Socrates was a *hero*, as Hegel called him. Thus, the discord between the individual and the reality around him is fully justified when the individual, being a *particular expression of the general*, by his negation prepares the historical ground for a new reality, for the reality of the future. But Belinsky does not reason thus. He advocates "resignation" to that which exists. Both in the article on Borodino and particularly in the article on Menzel,<sup>134</sup> he indignantly attacks "small great people" for whom history is a disconnected story, full of random and conflicting collisions between circumstances. In his words, such a view of history is the sad product of *common sense*. Common sense always grasps one aspect of an object only, whereas reason examines the object from all sides, although they appear to contradict one another. "And consequently reason does not create reality, but becomes conscious of it, having beforehand taken it as an axiom that all that is is necessary, legal and rational."

'*Reality* is the positive in life,' Belinsky says in another article, "illusoriness—its *negation*." If this is so, his attacks on the "small great people" who negate reality become perfectly understandable; people who negate reality are simple illusions. It is also easy to see that Belinsky is lapsing into the most extreme optimism. If all negation of reality is illusoriness, reality is irreproachable. It is interesting to follow how Belinsky tries to prove by historical examples that "the fates of mortals" are not left to blind chance.

"Omar set fire to the Alexandrian library: a curse upon Omar—he destroyed forever the enlightenment of the ancient world! But wait, kind sirs, before you curse Omar! Enlightenment is a wondrous thing; if it were an ocean and an Omar drained this ocean, there would still remain under the ground an invisible and secret spring of living water, which would not delay in bursting forth in a bright stream and turning into an ocean...." This is, of course, a very strange argument: from the fact that "Omars" will not succeed in draining all the sources of enlightenment, it by no means follows that their activity is harmless and that we should "wait before cursing them". In his optimism Belinsky is sometimes extremely naive. But we have seen that this optimism proceeded quite inevitably from his new view of reality. And this new view owed its origin not to the fact that Belinsky did not understand Hegel properly, but, on the contrary, that he had fully assimilated the spirit of Hegel's philosophy which was expressed in the Introduction to the *Philosophie des Rechts*.

We have expounded in detail the views expressed by Hegel in this Introduction. Let the reader compare them "with the reconciliatory" views of Belinsky, and he will be struck by their almost total identity. The only difference is that the "impetuous Vissarion" becomes far more impassioned than the calm German thinker, and therefore goes to extremes which Hegel does not reach. Belinsky says that "Voltaire was like Satan freed by a higher will from the adamantine fetters with which he was chained to the fiery dwelling of eternal darkness, and using his short period of liberty to destroy mankind". Hegel said nothing of the sort, and would never have done so. One could quote many such examples, but all these are details which do not affect the essence of the matter, namely, that in expressing his views, Belinsky was completely faithful to the spirit of Hegel's "absolute" philosophy. And if these reconciliatory views appear "strange" to Mr. Volynsky, this shows that he is ill acquainted with the works of "the man who conceived eternity", i.e., Hegel. True, in this case Mr. Volynsky is only repeating what has already been said before him by N. Stankevich, Herzen, Turgenev, etc. But he promised to examine the question of Hegel's influence on Belinsky's world outlook "with due thoroughness" and by means of "comparing certain of Belinsky's views with their primary source". Why has he confined himself to repeating other people's mistakes? Is it perhaps because he himself has a rather poor knowledge of the "primary source".\*

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\* Mr. A. Stankevich in his book «Т. Н. Грановский и его переписка», Москва, 1897 [*T. N. Granovsky and His Correspondence*, Moscow, 1897], like Mr. Volynsky, expresses the opinion that Belinsky's reconciliatory views were false deductions from Hegel's philosophy (Vol. I, pp. 107-08). Is Mr. A. Stankevich aware that it was Hegel himself who made "false deductions"?



Belinsky assimilated more fully than any of his friends, for example, M. B. and N. Stankevich, the conservative spirit of *that* philosophy of Hegel's which claimed to be the *absolute truth*. He probably sensed this himself and that is why he objected to friendly admonitions aimed at cooling his "reconciliatory" ardour: after all, his friends adhered to the point of view of the self-same allegedly absolute truth which Belinsky was now preaching after Hegel, and from this point of view all concessions to "liberal chatterboxes" were merely pathetic inconsistency.\*

It can, of course, be said that whereas Hegel reconciled himself to Prussian reality at the time of the appearance of the *Philosophie des Rechts*, it does not follow from this that he would have reconciled himself to Russian reality. This is true. But there is negation and negation. Hegel would have declared Russian reality to be semi-Asiatic; in general he believed that the Slavonic world was something between Europe and Asia. But Asiatic reality is also "embodied reason", and Hegel, not Hegel *the dialectician*, but Hegel *the proclaimer of "absolute truth"*, would hardly have approved of the revolt of the finite reason of some individuals against reality.

## VI

Let us now examine Belinsky's reconciliatory views from another aspect.

The social theories of the "liberal chatterboxes" irritate him by their superficial, anti-scientific character. The "chatterboxes" imagine that social relations can be changed according to people's whims, whereas in fact life and the development of society "are conditioned by immutable laws, which are contained within its very essence". The "chatterboxes" see arbitrariness and chance where in fact the necessary process of development is taking place. Social phenomena develop dialectically out of themselves, in accordance with inner necessity. Everything that does not contain a cause within itself, but comes from some alien "outside", lacks the character of rationality, and that which is not rational is no more than an illusion. These are the views which Belinsky opposes to the rationalistic view of social life bequeathed by the last century. And they are incomparably more profound and serious than the rationalistic view, which leaves no place for the scientific explanation of social phenomena. One would have to be a very *revered* Russian "sociologist" to see nothing but "philosophical rubbish" in Belinsky's reconciliatory views.

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\* In one of his letters to Y. M. Neverov Granovsky says that Bakunin was the first to criticise Belinsky's articles "On Borodino", etc. Unfortunately it is not clear from the letter on what this criticism was based. In any case it could not have been based on an understanding of the progressive aspect of Hegel's philosophy, at which M. B. arrived later.

In the same way only a very venerable Russian "sociologist" could, in view of Belinsky's opinions outlined above on life and the development of human society, make the remarkable discovery that our brilliant critic was more or less deceived by his "feeling for the truth" every time "an aesthetic phenomenon became complicated by philosophical and politico-moral elements". If by a feeling for the truth one understands a feeling for theoretical truth, and in questions of this kind only the latter is relevant, it must be acknowledged that Belinsky revealed a tremendous feeling for the truth when he hastened with delight to master and set about ardently preaching the view of history as a necessary and therefore law-governed process. In this case in the person of Belinsky Russian social thought for the first time and with brilliant boldness tackled the great task which, as we have seen, attracted the best minds of the nineteenth century.

Why is the position of the working class bad? Because "the present economic order in Europe began to develop at a time when the science that deals with this range of phenomena did not yet exist". Thus Mr. Mikhailovsky reasons. Belinsky would have recognised in this argument the rationalistic view of social life, which he detested, and would have equated it, in terms of its inner merit, with the superficial reasoning of the *liberal abbots*. "Reality, as embodied reason," he wrote, "always precedes consciousness, because before becoming conscious one must have an object of which to become conscious. This is why natural science, or teaching about nature, appeared long after nature itself, grammar after language, and history after the life experienced by peoples." On the same grounds he would have said that the science "dealing" with a given economic order could appear only after that order had developed, but that explaining this or that positive or negative quality of this order by its later appearance is as intelligent as ascribing the existence of infectious diseases to the fact that during the creation of the world there were no physicians from whom nature could borrow correct concepts of hygiene. It goes without saying that Belinsky would have been perfectly right from the point of view of present-day objective science. And therefore it emerges that already by the end of the thirties Belinsky's feeling for theoretical truth was stronger than that of Mr. Mikhailovsky and similar revered sociologists is now. It cannot be said that this conclusion is a very comforting one for the friends of our country's progress, but the truth must come before all else, and we cannot conceal it.

Let us take another example. The Narodniks wrote a great deal here about our land commune. They often made mistakes—more or less sincerely—in speaking of its history and its present-day position. But let us assume that, in this case they did not

make a single mistake and let us merely ask: were they not mistaken when they insisted that we should "reinforce" the commune with all our strength? By what were they guided in this? By the conviction that the modern commune is capable of turning into the highest economic form. But what are the economic relations that exist within the commune? Can their development lead to the transition of our present-day commune with re-allotments into the highest form of society? No, their development is leading, on the contrary, to the triumph of economic individualism. The Narodniks themselves, or at least the most astute of them, agreed with this on many occasions. But in that case what were they hoping? They were hoping that *external influence* on the commune from the intelligentsia and the government would overcome the *inner logic* of its own development. Belinsky would have been most contemptuous of such hopes. In them too he would have detected vestiges of the rationalistic view of social life. He would have declared them to be *illusory* and abstract, for everything that does not contain a cause within itself and comes from some alien "outside", and not from "inside" is illusory. And this again would have been perfectly right. And again one is compelled to draw the conclusion, not very flattering for our country's progress, that already by the end of the thirties Belinsky was closer to a scientific understanding of social phenomena than our present-day supporters of the old order.\*

Fundamental state decrees "are not law invented by man, but appear, so to say, before time and are merely articulated by man". Is this so or not? Belinsky's discussions of this subject are greatly obscured by his protective fervour at that time, as a result of which he occasionally expressed himself with a vague pomposity. However, in them also it is not hard to find a perfectly healthy core. From the point of view of present-day social science there can be no doubt that not only fundamental state decrees, but also legal institutions in general are an expression of real relations into which people enter not arbitrarily, but by virtue of necessity. In this sense all legal institutions in general "are merely articulated by man". And insofar as Belinsky's words have this sense, they should be acknowledged as perfectly correct. Our bearers of the "abstract ideal" who believe that legal norms

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\* It should be noted, however, that now only a few of the Narodniks are still dreaming of the transition of the commune into the highest form of society. Most of these worthy people, having abandoned all "nonsensical" ideas, are now "concerning themselves" merely with the well-being of the proprietary peasant in whose hands the commune is becoming a terrible instrument for the exploitation of the rural proletariat. It must be said that this type of concern is not "illusory" and has nothing in common with the "abstract ideal".

are created according to people's whims and that people can therefore make any eclectic hotch-potch that they like out of their legal institutions would do well to recall this more often.\*

We repeat, in the person of our brilliant critic Russian social thought for the first time boldly tackled the great task with which the nineteenth century presented all thinking people in Europe. Having understood the colossal importance of this task, Belinsky suddenly sensed firm ground under his feet and, delighted at the immense vista which had opened up before him, he looked at the reality around him with the eyes of an Epicurean for a while, as we have seen, anticipating the bliss of its philosophical cognition. And how could he help being angry with the "small great people" who by their—and it is time that this was admitted—theoretically totally unsubstantiated talk prevented him from indulging in quiet and joyful enjoyment of the unexpectedly discovered treasure of truth. How could Belinsky help attacking the bearers of the "abstract ideal" and heaping ridicule upon them, when he knew from his own experience the whole practical worthlessness of this ideal, when he still remembered so well the painful consciousness of himself as "completely insignificant", which in him had constantly accompanied the tense rapture aroused by this ideal? How could he help despising people who, although they desired the happiness of their neighbours, through their own short-sightedness regarded as harmful the very philosophy which Belinsky believed could alone bring happiness to the human race?

But this mood was short-lived; the reconciliation with reality turned out to be precarious. Already by October 1839, when he left for St. Petersburg taking with him the as yet unpublished article on *Essays on the Battle of Borodino*, Belinsky was very far from the bright and joyous view of all around which he acquired during the early period of his enthusiasm for Hegel's philosophy. "My inner suffering turned into a kind of dry bitterness," he says, "for me no one existed, because I myself was dead." True, this painful new mood was to a considerable extent conditioned by a lack of personal happiness, but knowing Belinsky's character one can say with certainty that he would probably not even have noticed this lack, had Hegel's philosophy given him even a part of what it promised. "It is ridiculous and annoying," he exclaims in a long letter to Botkin written between December 16, 1839 and the beginning of February 1840, "the love of Romeo and Juliet is something general, yet the reader's love or need for love is something particular and illusory. Life

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\* Thus, for example, many people in our country think that Russia could easily, on the one hand, "reinforce the commune" and, on the other, transplant onto this "reinforced" soil, i.e., the soil of Asiatic land tenure, certain institutions of West-European social law.

is in books, and in life there is nothing!" Note these words. They show that even at that time he was uneasy about Hegel's "*absolute*" conclusions. And indeed, if the task of a thinking person is confined to *cognition* of the reality around him; if every attempt by him at a "creative" attitude towards it is "illusory" and condemned to failure, nothing remains for him indeed except "*life in books*". Further, a thinking person is bound to reconcile himself with that which is. But "*that which is*" is not alive; "that which is" has already become petrified, the breath of life has already left it. That which is *becoming* (wird) is alive, that which is being produced by the process of development. What is life if not development? And in the process of development negation is a necessary element. For the man who does not allow sufficient space for this necessary element, life really does turn into "*nothing*", for in his reconciliation with "that which is" he is dealing not with life, but with that which once was but has already ceased to be life. Hegel's "absolute" philosophy, which proclaimed the reality of its day to be not subject to negation, by so doing declared that life can only be in books, and there should be no life outside books. It taught rightly that an individual should not place his personal whims and even essential interests above the interests of the "*genera*". But the interests of the genera, beloved by this philosophy, were the interests of stagnation. Belinsky felt this instinctively much earlier than he realised it intellectually. He was waiting for philosophy to point out the way to human happiness. The general question of the triumph of chance over human reason often appeared to him in the form of the particular question as to *why force triumphs over right?* How did Hegel reply to this? We have seen how: "There is no dominion of crude material force, no dominion of the bayonet and sword; right is force and force is right." Leaving aside the somewhat paradoxical form of this reply (which belongs not to Hegel, but to Belinsky), one must admit that it conceals a profound truth, which alone can provide a foundation for the hopes of the supporters of forward movement. This is strange, but true. Here is a striking example. "Our feudal rights are based on conquest," the defenders of the ancien régime in France shouted at Sieyès. "What of it!" he objected, "we will become conquerors in our turn." This proud reply expresses an awareness of the fact that the third estate was already mature enough to rule. And when it really did become a "conqueror", its rule was not the rule of material force alone: its force was also its right, and its right was based on the historical needs of France's social development. Everything that does not correspond to the needs of society, does not have any right behind it, but everything that has *such* a right behind it, will sooner or later have force as well. What could be more pleasing for all the true friends of progress than such a certitude? And

such a certitude is inevitably inspired by Hegel's view on the relation of right to force, *if it is properly understood*. But in order to understand it properly, one had to look both at history and at contemporary reality from the viewpoint of *dialectical development*, and not from the viewpoint of "absolute truth", which signifies a halt in all development. From the viewpoint of absolute truth the right of historical movement turned into the sacred and indisputable right of the Prussian Junkers to exploit the peasantry dependent on it, and all oppressed people were condemned to eternal oppression simply because "absolute truth" when it appeared in the world of consciousness found them weak, and therefore also without rights. C'était un peu fort,\* as the French say; and Belinsky was bound to notice this as soon as he began examining the details of his new world outlook. From his correspondence it is clear that what our literature terms as his break with Hegel was caused by the inability of Hegel's "absolute" philosophy to answer the social and historical questions which tormented him. "I am told: develop all the treasures of your spirit for free self-enjoyment of the spirit, weep in order to console yourself, grieve in order to be joyful, strive for perfection, climb to the top rung of the ladder of development, and if you stumble, fall, and the devil take you, that's the kind of man you were.... Thank you kindly, Yegor Fyodorovich, I bid farewell to your philosophical cap; but with all due respect for your philosophical philistinism, I have the honour to inform you that even if I did manage to climb to the top rung of the ladder of development, I would ask you to account to me for all the victims of the conditions of life and history, for all the victims of chance, superstition, the Inquisition, Philip II and so forth; or else I would throw myself down headfirst from the top rung. I do not want happiness even gratis, if my mind is not at ease concerning each of my brothers in blood.... They say that disharmony is a condition of harmony: perhaps, this is very advantageous and pleasing for music-lovers, but not, of course, for those whose lot it is to express the idea of disharmony by their fate...."

What does accounting for the victims of chance, superstition, the Inquisition, etc., mean? According to Mr. Volynsky it means nothing at all. "To these questions of Belinsky's which, for the sake of wit, are put in the form of an official report and supplied with a malicious interrogation of such a compromising nature," he says, "Hegel, stopping his excited opponent with a condescending smile, might have said: 'Development demands sacrifices from man, the painful feat of self-denial, great concern for the well-being of people, without which there is no individual well-being, but the philosophy of idealism does not sanctify chance

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\* [That was a bit too much.]

sacrifices, does not reconcile itself with superstitions, with the Inquisition. In the dialectical process of development there is a powerful instrument—*negation*, which leads people out of underground inquisitional casemates into the open air, into freedom. Chance is an anomaly, and only that which bears the imprint of divine justice and wisdom is rational!"\*

These eloquent lines as usual contain the terrible hotch-potch of badly digested ideas which is characteristic of Mr. Volynsky's philosophical talent. Firstly, Hegel would probably not have told Belinsky anything about the sacrifices and self-denial which the individual's intellectual and moral development demands from it. He would have realised that Belinsky was not talking about these sacrifices at all. Thus, the German idealist would have lost a valuable opportunity to concoct an eloquent phrase in keeping with Mr. Volynsky's rhetoric, but he would have approached the matter more quickly. And the matter here is the question as to whether the "*absolute*" conclusions at which Hegel arrived and the reconciliation with reality that he advocated in the Introduction to the *Philosophie des Rechts* did not contradict the element of *negation*, did not reduce to nothing this truly "*powerful instrument*". We have already seen that they did, that this contradiction really did exist and that it proceeded from the fundamental contradiction characteristic of the whole of Hegel's philosophy in general, i.e., the contradiction between the *dialectical* nature of this philosophy and its claim to the title of *absolute truth*. Mr. Volynsky evidently does not even suspect that this contradiction exists. This does little credit to his "philosophical talent". Yet Belinsky, on whom he permits himself to look down, had already sensed by the end of the thirties that this contradiction existed. "I have suspected for a long time," he says in the same letter, "that Hegel's philosophy is only an element, although a most important one, but that the absolute nature of its results is no good,\*\* that it would be better to die than to accept them." A Russian who "suspected" such things, and at the end of the thirties, must indeed have possessed high "philosophical organisation". And those "philosophical organisations" who do not understand him to this very day are bad ones. They deserve not even a "condescending" but a truly contemptuous smile.

Belinsky does not, of course, hold Hegel responsible for the feats of the Inquisition, the cruelty of Philip II, etc. When he asks him to account for all the victims of the historical movement of mankind, he is accusing him of betraying his own philosophy. And this accusation is extremely well founded. According to

\* *Russian Critics*, p. 102.

\*\* In his note Mr. Pypin says: "The original has a stronger expression here."

Hegel *freedom* is the *goal* of historical development, and *necessity* the *means* that leads to this goal. A philosopher who sees history from this lofty point of view cannot, of course, be accused of something which happened quite independently of his will and influence. But one can demand from him an indication of the means with the help of which reason will triumph over blind chance. These means can be provided by the *process of development* only. By declaring himself to be the possessor of absolute truth and reconciling himself with what exists, Hegel turned his back on all development and recognised as *reason that necessity* from which mankind was suffering in his day. This was tantamount to declaring himself to be philosophically bankrupt. And it was this bankruptcy that angered Belinsky. He was upset by the fact that following Hegel he could see in the Prussia of that day "*the most perfect state*".

This most perfect state rested on the exploitation (by extremely old-fashioned devices) of the majority for the benefit of the privileged minority. In revolting against Hegel's "absolute" philosophy, Belinsky realised this perfectly. He went over completely to the side of the oppressed. But he saw the oppressed not as producers living in certain social relations of production, but as people in general, oppressed human individuals. This is why he protests in the name of the individual. "It is time," he exclaims, "that the human individual, who is wretched enough as it is, was liberated from the vile fetters of irrational reality, the opinion of the mob and the tradition of barbaric times." On this basis some would not be averse to representing him as something in the nature of a liberal individualist. But this is quite wrong. Belinsky himself explains his mood at that time very well. "There was developing within me a fanatical love of the freedom and independence of the human individual," he says, "which is possible only in a society based on truth and valour.... The human individual has become a point on which I fear that I will go out of my mind. I am starting to love mankind like a Marat: to make the smallest part of it happy, I think I would destroy the rest by fire and sword." This is certainly not liberal individualism. Nor does the following categorical statement by Belinsky have anything in common with it: "I have now reached a new extreme, the idea of *socialism*, which has become for me the idea above all ideas ... the alpha and omega of faith and knowledge.... (For me) it has absorbed history, religion and philosophy. And therefore I now explain in terms of it my own life, your life, and the lives of all whom I have met on life's path" (in a letter to Botkin of September 8, 1844).

Mr. Pypin hastens to assure us that Belinsky's socialism was essentially quite harmless. In this case the esteemed scholar is labouring quite in vain: who does not know that the socialism



of that day contained nothing at all of practical danger for the social order of that time? But Belinsky's enthusiasm for socialism, although it did not contain anything terrible, is a very important event in his intellectual life. And therefore it must not be left unclarified, but the brightest possible light must be thrown upon it.

## VII

Why did Belinsky abandon "absolute" idealist philosophy so quickly and decisively for utopian socialism? In order to explain this transition, we must take another look at our critic's attitude to Hegel.

At the time when Belinsky denounced his article on Borodino as being stupid and unworthy of an honest writer, he continued to regard the period of his return from the Caucasus, i.e., the period of his *whole-hearted enthusiasm for Hegel's philosophy* as the beginning of his spiritual life. This period seemed to him "*the best, at least, the most remarkable time*" of his life. And he regarded the article on Borodino as stupid only by virtue of its conclusions, and not by virtue of its basic premises. "The idea which I attempted to develop in the article on Glinka's book on the Battle of Borodino," he says, "is basically correct." It was just that he could not make proper use of this correct basis. "But I should also have developed the idea of negation as an historical right, the first sacred one without which the history of mankind would have turned into a stagnant, stinking morass." The reader has perhaps not forgotten the passages quoted above by us from Hegel's lectures on the history of philosophy. These passages show that Hegel, insofar as he was true to his dialectic, fully recognised the historical right of negation. In rejecting Hegel's "absolute" conclusions, Belinsky thought that he was rejecting his philosophy as a whole. In fact, however, he was merely turning from Hegel the proclaimer of "absolute truth" to Hegel the dialectician. In spite of his ridicule of Hegel's philosophical cap, he still remained a pure Hegelian. His first article on Peter the Great is totally imbued with the spirit of Hegel's philosophy. The same spirit prevails in the second article, although here Belinsky tries to adopt a different point of view in his discussion of the influence of geographical environment on the spiritual characteristics of individual peoples, but these rather unconvincing arguments do not alter in the slightest the general character of his world outlook at that time, which remains completely idealistic.\* And all those who shared his views at that time also remained

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\* In this respect the article written in connection with Professor Nikitenko's Speech on Criticism (St. Petersburg, 1842) is most characteristic.

idealists. This would appear to have been insufficiently realised by his biographer. Mr. Pypin says that in Herzen's *Letters Concerning the Study of Nature* (published in *Otechestvenniye Zapiski* in 1843) "the tasks of philosophy and natural science were framed in the way in which the best thinkers frame them at the present time".\* This is a great mistake. Mr. Pypin was obviously led astray by the following definite remark by the author of the *Letters*: "Hegel put thinking on such a height, that it is impossible to take a step after him without leaving idealism behind one entirely." But this remark by no means prevented Herzen from remaining an idealist of the first water both in his views on nature (here he is a complete Hegelian) and in his historical philosophy. He thought that "in materialism one could not go further than Hobbes". He called materialists in history those people for whom "the whole of world history seems to be a matter of personal invention and strange chance coincidences"(!).\*\* Up to the middle of 1844 Herzen expresses himself everywhere in his *Diary* as an idealist. Only in July of that year does he speak favourably of Jordan's materialist article in Wigand's *Quarterly*.<sup>135</sup> But even this remark by no means indicates any fundamental change in his views.

Mr. Pypin also remarks that Belinsky's "last philosophical interest" was the positivism of A. Comte and Littré, "as the decisive negation of metaphysics". It is a great pity that Mr. Pypin did not print in full the letter in which, according to him, Belinsky dwelt at length on positivism. Judging by the passage from this letter quoted by Mr. Pypin, our critic's opinion of A. Comte was unfavourable, as Mr. Pypin himself admits: "Comte is a splendid person," says Belinsky, "but there can be no question that he was the founder of a new philosophy! For this one needs genius, of which there is not a trace in Comte." This is why we do not think that Belinsky would have inclined to positivism, had death not carried him away so prematurely to the grave. If it is a matter of conjecturing, we would permit ourselves to suggest that with time he would have become a zealous adherent of dialectical materialism, which in the second half of the nineteenth century took the place of idealist philosophy that had had its day: the historical development of the philosophical thought that attracted him took precisely this direction, and it is no accident that he enjoyed reading the *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher*, in which the future founders of dialectical materialism wrote. If he had nothing against their views in 1845, why would he have objected to them later, when they had developed and obtained a firm foundation?

\* *Belinsky, etc.*, Vol. I, p. 228.

\*\* It is interesting to compare this with the reproaches that are now being directed from all sides at the "economic" materialists.

Here the following point should be made: our assumption is supported by the logical filiation of philosophical ideas. But against it one might say that it would have been difficult for Belinsky, who was terribly remote from the centres of West-European intellectual life and perpetually burdened with pressing work, not to lag behind the best minds of Europe. The most brilliant person requires for his development the beneficial influence of the environment which surrounds him: in our country this environment was terribly backward in all respects. This is why it is possible that Belinsky would not have succeeded to the end of his days in arriving at the fully defined and well-ordered world outlook for which he strove so ardently and so constantly. It is also possible that the social awakening which began in the second half of the fifties would have made him a leader of our enlighteners of that time. As we shall see in the next article, in the latter years of his life his views contained many elements that would have made such a transition to the enlightened viewpoint which was quite lawful in Russia at that time relatively easy.

However, enough of hypotheses. Let us return to the facts.

Belinsky had to develop the idea of negation. Mr. Pypin, following the author of the *Essays on the Gogol Period of Russian Literature*,<sup>136</sup> thinks that Herzen gave him considerable assistance in the matter of this development. He is, of course, right in the sense that talks and arguments with such a lively, intelligent and broadly educated person as Herzen could not help influencing Belinsky's views. But we think that the meetings with Herzen, although they greatly stimulated Belinsky's intellectual activity, did little to promote the development of a dialectical view of social phenomena in him. Herzen had difficulty in understanding dialectics. We know that to the end of his days he regarded Proudhon's *Contradictions économiques* as a highly successful application of the dialectical method to the study of social economy. He saw that Hegel's philosophy properly understood could not (no matter what Hegel himself said) be the philosophy of stagnation. But if anyone failed to understand Hegel's expression of the rational nature of all reality it was the brilliant, but superficial Herzen. He says in *My Past and Thoughts*: "The philosophical phrase which has done the most harm and on which German conservatives tried to reconcile philosophy with the political life of Germany, 'all that is real is rational', was the differently expressed principle of *sufficient reason* and of the correspondence of logic to facts." But Hegel would never have been content with such a common place as "the principle of sufficient reason". The philosophers of the eighteenth century also recognised this principle, although they were very far from Hegel's view of history as a law-governed process. It is all a matter of where and how

a given theory of society looks for the sufficient reasons for social phenomena. Why did the ancien régime in France fall? Was it because Mirabeau was very eloquent? Or because the French protectors of that time lacked talent? Or because the royal family did not succeed in escaping? The "principle" pointed out by Herzen merely vouches for the fact that there was a reason for the fall of the ancien régime, but does not give any indications as to the method of studying this reason. And it was this sad defect that Hegel's philosophy sought to remedy. By examining historical development of mankind as a law-governed process, it sought to eliminate the viewpoint of *chance*.<sup>\*</sup> And *necessity* also was understood by Hegel in a quite different sense of the word. If we say, for example, that the ancien régime in France fell as a result of the chance failure of the royal family's attempt to escape, we admit that, once this attempt had failed, the fall of the ancien régime became *necessary*. Understood in this vulgar and superficial way necessity is merely the reverse side of chance. In Hegel it has a different significance. When he says that a given social phenomenon is necessary, this means that it has been prepared by the internal development of the country in which it takes place.... And this is not all. According to the meaning of his philosophy any phenomenon in the process of its development creates out of its very self the forces which later negate it. Applied to social life this means that any given social order itself creates the negative elements which destroy it and replace it by another order. If you have understood the process of the origin of these elements, you have also understood the process of the withering away of the old order. When Belinsky said that he "should have developed the idea of negation", he meant that he should have noted the historical inevitability of the appearance of the elements indicated in any given social order. He was committing a grave error when he ignored this important aspect of the task. But the "principle of sufficient reason" pointed out by Herzen was not at all "sufficient" to remedy this logical blunder. In this sense Belinsky was left entirely to his own powers.

To develop the idea of negation meant, incidentally, to admit the right of the "ideal" which Belinsky sacrificed to reality in the heat of his enthusiasm for Hegel. But the ideal which was valid according to Belinsky's new point of view could not be an "ab-

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\* Hegel said, it is true, that all that is finite contains an element of chance (in allem Endlichen ist ein Element des Zufälligen), but according to the meaning of his philosophy *chance* is encountered only at the point of intersection of several necessary processes. Therefore the concept of chance which he accepts (quite rightly) by no means prevents the scientific explanation of phenomena: in order to understand the given *chance*, one must be able to find a satisfactory explanation of *at least two necessary processes*.

*stract ideal*". Since the historical negation of reality is the result of its own development, the only ideal that can be recognised as valid is that which rests on this development. This ideal will not be "divorced from the historical and geographical conditions of development", one cannot say of it that it is "built in the air". It simply expresses in thoughts and images the results of the process of development that is already taking place in reality. And it is *concrete* precisely insofar as this developing reality is concrete.

From this it follows that whereas Belinsky in the first phase of his development sacrificed reality to the ideal, and in the second the ideal to reality, in the third and final phase he sought to reconcile the ideal with reality by means of an *idea of development* which would give the ideal a firm foundation and change it from an "*abstract*" to a *concrete* one.

This was now Belinsky's task. It was a great task. As long as people cannot solve such tasks, they cannot influence their own development and the development of society consciously and therefore remain the plaything of chance. But in order to set oneself this task, it was necessary to break with the *abstract* ideal, after understanding and sensing fully its total impotence. In other words: he had to experience a moment of reconciliation with reality. That is why this moment does him great credit. And that is why he himself subsequently regarded it as the beginning of his spiritual life.

But it is one thing to set oneself a certain task, and quite another to solve it. When disputes arose between the young people who belonged to the Stankevich-Belinsky circle on some difficult question, they reached the conclusion sometimes, after grappling with it in vain, that "only Hegel would have been able to solve this". Belinsky could have said the same thing now, when he had to apply the dialectical method to the explanation of Russia's historical development. But Hegel too would not have warranted his confidence. Dialectical idealism correctly set the great task of social science of the nineteenth century: the study of social development as a law-governed process, but did not solve it, although it did a great deal to pave the way for this solution.

To study an object is to explain its development first and foremost in terms of the forces which it engenders out of itself. This is what Hegel says. In his philosophy of history he indicated the moving forces of historical development very accurately in *individual cases*. But in *general* his idealism diverted him from the true path of research. If the logical development of the "*idea*" is the basis of all else, including historical development, history is explained in the final analysis by the logical qualities of the "*idea*", and not by the dialectical development of social rela-

tions. And Hegel did appeal to these qualities every time he encountered this or that important historical question. And this meant explaining perfectly concrete phenomena by abstractions. The mistake of idealism is precisely that it ascribes creative and moving force to abstractions. This is why arbitrary logical constructions so often take the place with the idealists of a study of the true causation of events. The correct, truly scientific theory of the historical development of mankind could not appear until dialectical idealism had been replaced by dialectical materialism. Belinsky did not live to see this new age. True, in his time a considerable amount of diverse material was collected for working out a true view of history. The April issue of the journal *Novoye Slovo* for 1897 quoted several statements by V. P. Botkin concerning the role of economic interests in the historical development of mankind. It is not surprising that Botkin held such opinions. Before he became devoted to Hegel's philosophy he was a Saint-Simonist; and Saint-Simon explains the whole of modern European history in terms of the struggle of economic interests.\* Later Botkin could have borrowed a great deal in this respect from other utopian socialists, for example, Victor Considérant\*\* and even Louis Blanc (from his *Histoire des dix ans*). Finally, he could also have obtained a great deal from the French historians: Guizot, Mignet and Tocqueville. It is hard to imagine that Botkin was unfamiliar with the famous work *De la démocratie en Amérique*, the first volume of which came out in 1836. In this work the dependence of social development on economic relations (or, to be more precise, property relations) is taken to be an indisputable truth. According to Tocqueville, once the property relations are given, they "can be regarded as the prime cause of most of the laws, customs and ideas which determine the behaviour of nations". Even that which has not been created by these relations, at least changes in accordance with them. Therefore, in order to understand the legislation and habits of a given people, one must study the property relations which prevail in that people.\*\*\* The last two volumes of this first work by Tocqueville are devoted entirely to a study of how the property relations which exist in the United States influence the intellectual and aesthetic habits and requirements of Americans. Consequently Botkin could without the slightest difficulty arrive at

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\* See in particular *Catéchisme politique des industriels* where this view is expounded most clearly in relation to French history. See also his letter to the editor of the *Journal Général de France* of May 12, 1818, where Saint-Simon says: "La loi qui constitue la propriété est la plus importante de toutes; c'est elle qui sert de base à l'édifice sociale." ["The law which sets up property is the most important of all; it serves as the base of the social edifice."]

\*\* See in particular *Destinées sociales*.

\*\*\* Vol. I, p. 74, 1836 edition.

the conclusion that people's spiritual development is determined by the course of social development. Belinsky was probably familiar with this belief of his. It made itself felt, for example, in his view on the historical importance of Pushkin's poetry.\* But it could not serve him as a reliable guiding line in his development of the *concrete ideal*.

The point is that both Saint-Simon, Considérant and the other utopian socialists and the historians who saw property relations as the most important base of the social edifice and the development of these relations as the main cause of social movement were *idealists*. They understood the social significance of economics, but they did not see the basic cause, on the operation of which the economic structure of any given society depends. With them it followed that this cause was partly favourable or unfavourable chance (for example, advantageous geographical location, conquest, etc.), and partly human nature. This is why all of them, in defending their cherished social institutions or the plans of such institutions, appealed mainly to human nature. But appealing to human nature means adopting the viewpoint of the *abstract ideal*, and not the viewpoint of the dialectical development of social relations. Herein lies the essence of the *utopian view* of society. Before the appearance of the historical theory of the author of *Capital* all socially active people who were not totally indifferent to theory, from the extreme Left to the extreme Right, were utopians to a greater or lesser extent. It is therefore understandable that Belinsky too, at the end of his truce with reality, should have adopted the utopian viewpoint, in spite of his conscious striving for the *concrete ideal*. This striving was able to leave its mark only on certain isolated views, ideas and verdicts of his.

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\* And not only in this view, of course. In the article "St. Petersburg and Moscow" Belinsky compares these two towns, trying to determine the idea which each of them represents: "St. Petersburg represents one idea, Moscow another." This is, of course, the completely idealist viewpoint which prevailed in the world outlook of our thinking people of that time. But in the middle of Belinsky's idealist argument one is suddenly surprised to find the following idea: "But in the preceding reign Moscow gradually began to become a trading, industrial and manufacturing town. It clothed the whole of Russia with its cotton spun (sic!) goods; its remote parts, its outskirts and uyezds, were covered with factories, both large and small. And in this respect St. Petersburg cannot vie with it, because Moscow's very position in the middle of Russia has destined it to be a centre of domestic industry. And will it not be a greater one in this respect when the railway links it with St. Petersburg and, like arteries from the heart, highroads stretch from it to Yaroslavl, Kazan, Voronezh, Kharkov, Kiev and Odessa...." Here he is expressing a presentiment of the fact that with a change in the economic role of Moscow the "idea" which it represents must change also. This is an interesting little example of the intervention of materialism in a world outlook which basically remains still completely idealist.

## VIII

"In Moscow during a conversation with Granovsky at which I was present," says Kavelin in his reminiscences, "Belinsky ... expressed the Slavophil idea that Russia would be able to solve the social question and put an end to the enmity of capital and property with labour better, perhaps, than Europe."\*

This is indeed a purely Slavophil idea, which was later absorbed by our Narodniks and subjectivists. In Belinsky, the sworn enemy of Slavophiles, it could arise only as the result of his enthusiasm for utopian socialism.

We have already seen that in his sympathy for the oppressed he regarded them not as people who lived and worked in certain historical conditions, but as a sum total of "individuals" unjustly deprived of the rights which belong naturally to the human individual.

From this abstract point of view the further development of social relations was bound to appear dependent not so much on their own inner logic, as on the personal qualities of the people who were in one way or another oppressed by these relations. The *dialectic* was bound to give way to the *utopia*.

Belinsky occasionally looked at the future destiny of Russia also from the point of view of the qualities of the Russian "individual". In the article "*A Look at Russian Literature in 1846*" he says: "Yes, we have a national life, we are called upon to tell the world our message, our idea." What is this message? He does not wish to engage in reflection and conjecture on this point, "fearing above all arbitrary conclusions which have only a subjective significance." (As we can see, his attitude to subjectivism remained what it was when he wrote the article on the Borodino anniversary.)

But nevertheless he believes that the many-sidedness with which the Russian understands foreign nationalities enables one to make certain assumptions concerning his future cultural mission. "We do not assert it as indisputable that the Russian people is destined to express in its nationality the most rich and many-sided content and that herein lies the reason for its remarkable ability to apprehend and assimilate all that is alien to it," he says, "but we venture to think that such an idea as an assumption expressed without self-advertisement and fanaticism is not entirely without foundation." In a letter to Botkin of March 8, 1847 he expresses himself bluntly in the same vein:

"The Russian personality is still an embryo; but how much breadth and power there are in the nature of this embryo, how

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\* Pypin, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 209. According to Kavelin this conversation took place *several years after* the time which he describes, which was 1843.



oppressive and terrible for it are all one-sidedness and narrow-mindedness. It fears and hates them above all else—and does so rightly, to my mind, being content so far with nothing, rather than enslaving itself to some base one-sidedness. And as to the assertion that we are all-embracing because we have nothing to do—the more I think about this, the more I realise and am convinced that it is a lie.... Do not think that I am an enthusiast in this question. No, I arrived at its solution (for myself) along the painful path of doubt and negation."

Such a "solution" opened the doors wide for the Slavophil view of the social question in Russia. We know on what this view was founded: on the entirely erroneous idea of the historical development of the Russian commune. Just what this idea was for the advanced people of that time can be seen clearly from the following remark in Herzen's *Diary*: "*The Montenegrins are an example of the highest development of the Slavonic commune.*" But the Montenegrin commune is a *tribal* commune, quite unlike our *village* commune which was created by the state in order to safeguard the interests of the exchequer long after tribal life had declined in our country. Our village commune could not possibly have "developed" in the direction of the Montenegrin commune.\* But our Westerners of that time took as abstract a view of the "commune" as the Slavophiles. And if they occasionally held the conviction that a great future awaited it, this was a simple matter of faith, the result of a pressing moral need to forget, albeit in fantasies, the painful impressions received from the reality around them. Herzen says directly in his *Diary*: "Chaadayev once made the brilliant remark that one of the greatest characters\*\* of the Christian outlook is the elevation of hope into a virtue and the placing of it together with faith and charity. I agree with him entirely. This aspect of hope in affliction, firm hope in what appears to be a hopeless situation must be realised primarily by us." Why did people like Herzen feel themselves to be in a hopeless situation? Because they had not succeeded in working out for themselves any kind of *concrete ideal*, i.e., an ideal which was suggested by the historical development of the reality which they detested; and not having worked out such an ideal, they experienced the same painful consciousness that Belinsky felt during the period of his youthful enthusiasm for the *abstract* ideal: they felt themselves to be totally impotent. "We are outside the people's needs," Herzen complains. He would not have said this, if he had seen that the "idea of negation" which was characteristic of him was the result of the inner development of the people's

\* On the Montenegrin commune see Mr. Popovich's very interesting work *Recht und Gericht in Montenegro*, Agram, 1877.

\*\* The word *character* would seem to be out of place here. Is it not perhaps a misprint? The meaning of the quotation is perfectly clear, however.

life. Then he could not have felt himself to be outside the people's needs. Just like Herzen Belinsky exclaims: "We are the unfortunate anchorites of the new Scythia; we are people without a homeland—no, even worse than without a homeland; we are people whose homeland is an illusion, and is it surprising that we ourselves are illusions, that our friendship, our love, our aspirations, our activity are also illusions?" In view of such a mood the temporary inclination to Slavophil fantasies is understandable even in a person with such a strong logical mind as Belinsky.

We said "temporary inclination". Everything shows that in Belinsky's case, unlike Herzen's, it was not only temporary, but also very short-lived. Herzen rightly said of him that he "*cannot look for life in the age to come*". What the Germans call *jenseits*\* had little power over him. He needed the firm ground of reality. Already in the article "A Look at Russian Literature in 1846", from which we quoted above certain doubtful hypotheses concerning the future of Russian civilisation, he remarks, in criticising the Slavophiles' attacks on Peter's reforms: "Such events in the life of a people are too great to be chance events, and the life of a people is not a frail craft which any man can direct as he likes with a light movement of the oar. Instead of thinking about the impossible and making a laughing stock of oneself by arrogant intervention in historical destinies, it is far better to recognise the irresistible and immutable reality of that which exists and act on its basis, guided by reason and common sense, and not by fantasies of the Manilov type."<sup>137</sup> In another passage, admitting that the reforms in question had a somewhat unfavourable influence on Russian popular character, he makes the following important reservation: "But we must not stop at recognising the rightness of this or that fact, but must study its causes, in the hope of finding in evil itself the means of escaping from it." The means for struggling against the unfavourable consequences of the Petrine reforms must be sought in the reforms themselves, in the new elements which they introduced into Russian life. This is a perfectly dialectical view of the question, and insofar as Belinsky adheres to it in his dispute with the Slavophiles, his ideas are void of the utopian element, they are *concrete*. He senses this himself, as he directs a few blows in passing at his old, importunate enemy—the *abstract ideal*. "The unconditional or absolute method of reasoning," he says, "is the easiest, but also the most unreliable; it is now called the abstract method." The chief cause of all the Slavophiles' mistakes is, according to him, "the fact that they run arbitrarily ahead of time, take the process of development for its result, want to see the fruit before the blossom and, finding the leaves tasteless, declare the

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\* [the other side]

fruit to be rotten and suggest transplanting a huge forest, stretching over a vast expanse, to another place and cultivating it in a different way. In their opinion this is not easy, but it is possible." This passage contains such a profound and serious view of social life, that we warmly recommend it to the attention of our present-day Slavophiles, i.e., Narodniks and subjectivists, Mr. N...on and other "enemies of capitalism". He who assimilates this view will not endeavour, like Mr. N...on, to impose on "society" the notorious task which it is unable not only to solve, but even to understand; not will he, like Mr. Mikhailovsky, think that following "*in Peter's footsteps*" means cultivating a utopia; in short, he will on no account reconcile himself with "*the abstract ideal*".

Three months before his death, on February 15, 1848, Belinsky, already seriously ill, dictated a letter to Annenkov in Paris which contains some interesting opinions, but which has only recently begun to attract the attention of thinking Russians.

"When I called you a conservative in my arguments with you about the bourgeoisie," he says, "I was the fool and you were the intelligent one.\* France's entire future is in the hands of the bourgeoisie, all progress depends on it alone, and the people can only play a passive, auxiliary role at times. When I said in the presence of my religious friend\*\* that Russia needs a Peter the Great now, he attacked this idea like a heresy, saying that the people must do everything for itself. What a naive, Arcadian thought!... My religious friend also argued with me, that Russia would be far better off without a bourgeoisie. But it is now obvious that Russia's inner process of civil development will begin only when the Russian nobility turns into a bourgeoisie.... What a strange person I am! When I get some mystical nonsense into my head, sensible people rarely manage to knock it out with proof: I need to get together with mystics, pietists and visionaries who are obsessed by the same idea, and only then am I dissuaded. My religious friend and our Slavophiles have rendered me a great service. Do not be surprised at the juxtaposition: the best of the Slavophiles regard the people exactly as my religious friend does, they have absorbed these concepts from the socialists."

This was one of the results of Belinsky's journey abroad. At that time the pulse of social life was beating very strongly in Paris, and the socialists of the different schools had acquired a considerable, although precarious influence on the world outlook of the French "intelligentsia". At that time many Russians with an ardent interest in the social question were living there, as can be seen from Annenkov's reminiscences. Greatly excited by the

\* "There are stronger expressions in the original," Mr. Pypin remarks.

\*\* According to Mr. Pypin "this is what Belinsky called one of his Paris friends".<sup>138</sup>

social environment around them, our fellow-countrymen were probably bound to indulge in fantasies on the subject of the future role of Russia in solving the social question even more readily and strongly than they did at home. Encountering extreme opinions of this kind, Belinsky, thanks to his characteristic strong feeling for theoretical truth, immediately detected their weak side: their total abstractness, total absence of any rational and conscious relation to Russia's historical course of development. The long familiar and painful need to link ideas to life, to obtain from dialectics an explanation of our reality, was bound to speak out again in the old Hegelian. And so he makes the future destiny of Russia dependent on her economic development: Russia's inner process of civil development will begin only when the Russian nobility turns into a bourgeoisie. The historical conditions of such a change are unclear to him. To quote him, Russia needs a new Peter. He does not see that the economic consequences of Peter I's reforms are quite enough for the development of capitalism in our country. Nor does he see the historical relation of the bourgeoisie to the "people" in Western Europe. He sees the people as condemned to "a passive, auxiliary role". This is a mistake, of course. But in fact the utopian socialists also assigned the people a totally passive role; the only difference is that according to their views the people was to play "a passive, auxiliary role" not in the process of the further development of the already existing economic order, but in the matter of social reform, in which the initiative and the guiding role were to belong to the right-thinking and noble intelligentsia, i.e., to the children of the self-same bourgeoisie. Belinsky's attitude to the socialists is rather contemptuous; he seems ready to slight them too, like the pietists and mystics. And he is right to a considerable extent: their views did indeed contain much that was quite fantastic and unscientific, and their chief mistake, like the mistake of the Slavophiles (according to Belinsky's remark quoted above) was that they regarded evil only as evil without noticing its other side that changes the very foundations of society radically.\* Belinsky attempts unsuccessfully to correct this mistake, by condemning the "people" to an eternally passive role, but that he sees this mistake perfectly well is clear from the very fact that he extols the importance of the bourgeoisie, i.e., capitalism. In his eyes capitalism now represents the idea of development, which has not found a proper place in the socialists' doctrines.

This attitude towards the utopians involuntarily reminds one of Belinsky's contemptuous attitude towards the "small great

\* Incidentally, Belinsky adopted a negative attitude towards the socialists even before his journey abroad. He likes Littré, *inter alia*, because he does not belong to them. (Letter to Botkin of Jan. 29, 1847.)

people", whom he berated so strongly in the period of his conciliatory mood. The "small great people" angered him by the fact that, regarding social life from the rationalistic point of view, they did not even suspect the existence of an inner dialectic characteristic of this life. Belinsky is much less harsh towards the utopians, although he calls them mystics. He realises that they are guided in their enthusiasms not by fancy or vanity, but by the desire for the public good, whereas the "small great people" seemed to him to be vain phrase-mongers. But his displeasure with the utopians is aroused by the same reason that had once determined his hatred for "small great people": *the abstract nature of their ideal*.

I. S. Turgenev called Belinsky a *central figure*. We would also call him this, although in a different sense. To our mind, Belinsky is the central figure in the whole course of the development of Russian social thought. He sets himself, and, consequently, others also, the great task without solving which we would never have known which road will lead civilised mankind to happiness and the triumph of reason over the blind, elemental force of necessity; we would have remained forever in the sterile sphere of fantasies "of the Manilov type", in the sphere of the ideal "divorced from geographical and historical conditions, built in the air". The more or less correct solution of this task should serve as a criterion for assessing the whole subsequent development of our social concepts. He said of those who shared his views: "Our generation is Israelites who are lost in the wilderness and not destined to see the Promised Land. And all our leaders are Moses, not Joshuas."

And he really was our Moses, who, if he did not deliver himself and those of like mind from the Egyptian yoke of the *abstract* ideal, tried to do so with all his strength. This is a tremendous, inestimable service. And that is why it is high time that we examined the history of his intellectual development and his literary activity from the standpoint of the *concrete* views of our day. The more attentively we study this history, the more profoundly we become convinced that Belinsky was the finest philosophical organisation that ever appeared in our literature.

We may perhaps be reproached for the fact that so far we have not touched upon Belinsky's literary views as such. But these views were always closely linked with the whole of his philosophical world outlook, and it was necessary for us first to become acquainted with albeit the most important aspects of this world outlook. Now that we are familiar with them, we can proceed to examine the guiding principles of Belinsky's critical activity as such. And we shall do so in the following article,<sup>139</sup> in which we shall compare these principles with the literary theories prevalent in this country throughout our period of Enlighten-

ment. Having elucidated the views of our *Enlighteners*, we shall very easily understand the role and significance of our *soporifics*, i.e., those "sociologists" of various persuasions who appeared with their abstract "formulas of progress" at a time when, for a variety of reasons, the literary activity of almost all the *Enlighteners* had ceased. In this article we hope to solve once and for all the old, but very interesting question as to why *small people seem large, when the great retire from the scene*.

## V. G. BELINSKY<sup>140</sup>

*(An Address Given in the Spring of 1898  
to Commemorate the Fiftieth Anniversary of Belinsky's  
Death before Russian Gatherings in Geneva, Zurich  
and Berne)*

I shall be dealing in this address with the part played by Vissarion Grigoryevich Belinsky in the history of Russia's intellectual development. First, however, I shall take this opportunity to refresh our memories of this fine man.

He once wrote, describing himself, that the dominant element in his nature was his impassioned temperament.

"My impassioned temperament is the source of all my sufferings and joys," he added, "and since Fate has refused me so much, I find it impossible to commit myself only half-heartedly to what little she has allowed me. For me even my friendships with other men have been passions, and I have been known to show jealousy in these passions."

Naturally, this basic feature of Belinsky's character makes itself felt in all his public sympathies and antipathies. It is to be glimpsed in his articles, in spite of the fact that the diligent hand of the censor steadfastly and inexorably robbed them of all their emotional colour; it bursts out as a rushing torrent in the indignation of his famous letter to Gogol<sup>141</sup>; it imparts an irresistible charm to all his correspondence; and, finally, it is the determining factor of his attitude to his opponents. He was always a passionate polemicist.

"Polemics sometimes come under attack in Russia, especially in journalism," he wrote in his famous first article "Literary Reveries". "This is quite natural. Can those who are indifferent to the intellectual life be expected to understand how one could prefer truth to good manners, and subject oneself to hatred and persecution for its sake? Oh, they can never know what bliss, what delight it is to tell some retired genius without a uniform that he is ridiculous and pathetic in his childish claims to greatness and explain to him that his importance as a literary figure was established not by himself, but by some loud-mouthed journalist. Or to tell some veteran that he is enjoying his authority on credit, either through old memories or through old habits. Or prove to

some literary maître that he is short-sighted, that he has fallen behind the times and should start again with the alphabet, and tell some nonentity from God knows where, some old fox of a Vidocq [a hint at Bulgarin—*G. P.*], some literary shop-keeper, that his person is an insult both to the literary style in which he writes, and to those good people whose credit he exploits, that he has blasphemed against the holiness of truth and the holiness of knowledge, then brand him as an outcast and tear off his mask, even if it is a baron's [a hint at Senkovsky—"Baron Brambeus"—*G. P.*], and show him to the world in all his nakedness!... I tell you, in all of this is ineffable delight and infinite sweetness!"

In 1842, i.e., when Belinsky was no longer a young man, in one of his letters to Botkin he thanked him for news of the Slavophiles in the following words:

"Thank you for the news of the Slavophiles.... If I am not mistaken about myself and my own feelings, I am overjoyed by the hatred of those gentlemen; I lap it up as the gods ambrosia, as Botkin (my friend) devours anything sweet; I would delight in their vengeance.... I will keep enraging them, driving them frantic and baiting them. It is a battle of trifles, but at least it is a battle; a war with frogs, but at least not peace with sheep."

In another letter written at about the same time he admits:

"I now feel fully and keenly that I was born for skirmishes in print and that my vocation, life, happiness, the air I breathe and the food I eat are *polemics*."

The same thing was felt—probably even more keenly—by both his many friends and his countless enemies. This is what Panayev has to say of him in his reminiscences:

"To gain a complete impression of B., to see him in his full glory, one had to lead the conversation onto those social matters and problems which interested him keenly, and to bait him by contradiction; once his interest was caught, he suddenly gained in stature, his words flowed out in a torrent, his whole body was redolent of hidden energy and strength, sometimes he ran out of breath and all the muscles in his face tensed.... He would attack his opponent with the strength of a man possessing authority, play with him in passing like a piece of straw, ridicule him, make him look foolish, and all the while continue to develop his train of thought with astonishing energy. At such moments this man who was usually shy, bashful and gawky changed beyond recognition."

We read almost exactly the same thing in Herzen's *My Past and Thoughts*: "In this timid man, this puny body there dwelt the powerful nature of a gladiator!... Yes, he was a strong fighter! He could not preach or instruct, he needed argument. Without objections, without irritation he spoke badly, but when he felt injured, when it was a question of his precious beliefs, his cheek



muscles began to twitch and his voice to break, and then you should have seen him: he pounced upon his opponent like a leopard, tore him to pieces, made him ridiculous and pathetic, and on the way developed his own idea with remarkable force, remarkable poetry. The argument very often ended in blood which flowed from the sick man's throat; pale, gasping, his eyes fixed on the person to whom he was speaking, he would raise a handkerchief to his mouth with a shaking hand and stop, deeply pained, crushed by his physical weakness. How I loved and pitied him at such moments!"

It goes without saying that Belinsky's opponents, i.e., those whom he made to look foolish and ridiculous by playing with them like pieces of straw regarded this passion in his character as something very unpleasant. They called him a literary *bulldog* and accused him of hating all things Russian: remember the well-known verses in which Belinsky is addressed in the following words:

*No, your exploit's not worth praising,  
You shun Russia and you show it;  
Karamzin is stung most cruelly,  
Lomonosov's not a poet....*<sup>142</sup>

But I hope, ladies and gentlemen, that you will not be surprised if I say that this "bulldog", this fiery and awe-inspiring polemicist, was an extremely compassionate man. The hero of the drama he wrote in his youth, Dmitry Kalinin, says of himself:

"You cannot imagine the feelings I always experienced when I looked upon an unhappy person. If I ever heard a tale unfold of injustice, persecution, of the cruelty of the powerful towards the weak, of the misuse of authority, then hell burned in my breast!"

Here Kalinin is expressing what took place in the heart of Belinsky himself on all such occasions. Since I have started on this subject, I cannot resist the temptation to read you an extract from his letter of September 8, 1841, to the afore-mentioned Botkin:

"What comfort is it for me that the élite lives in felicity, if the majority does not even know that such a thing exists? To hell with that felicity, if I am only one in a thousand to enjoy it! I do not want it, if I do not share it with my lesser brethren! My heart overflows and pounds madly at the sight of the mob and its representatives.... If I give a mite to a beggar-woman, I run away from her as though I had committed some misdeed, as though I was trying to avoid the sound of my own footsteps. And they call that life, to sit in rags on the streets, with an idiotic expression on one's face, to collect a few pence in a day only to spend them on drink at the tavern in the evening—and people

see it, and look the other way!... And they call this a society founded on reason; a phenomenon of reality!... Seeing all this, does a real *human being* have the right to find oblivion in art or knowledge?"

It was this feature that was most fully developed in the Russian progressives of the sixties, and became the basic cause of their negative attitude towards art that was so misunderstood and so wrongly interpreted by the Russian protectors of those days and the Russian decadents of our own. For the progressives of the sixties the problem of art was primarily a moral problem; they posed themselves the question of whether *we* have the right to enjoy art when the majority of those about us are deprived not only of that enjoyment, but even of the means of satisfying their most basic, but most pressing and urgent needs. But they were accused of immorality, of coarse feelings, of narrow-mindedness, even of indifference to the interests of those very poor for whose sake they renounced the pleasures of art and other good things of life.

The extract from Belinsky's letter to Botkin which I have just quoted is striking proof of how completely unfounded all these accusations are.

However, the important thing here for me is not that these accusations are unfounded, but the fact that Belinsky during the last period of his life viewed art in exactly the same way as Chernyshevsky, Dobrolyubov and other progressives of the sixties did later. The social movement of those years, like that of the next decade as well, was, in its most extreme manifestation, a movement of that sector of society which has been neatly defined as the *raznochintsi*. This was the background from which Belinsky came. He was one of the first and, without any doubt at all, the most vivid literary exponent of the intellectual *raznochintsi*. He posed the same problems which they were to pose later; he was tormented by the same torments which they were fated to suffer, and, a brilliant representative of the *raznochintsi*, he had already pointed out in general terms the path which would lead that portion of our *raznochintsi* who were capable of development towards fruitful social activity. And herein lies the great social significance of Belinsky's literary activity.\*

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\* This also explains the enthusiastic respect in which he was held by the progressive *raznochintsi* of the sixties and seventies. Of this attitude I will give two examples. In his *Essays on the Gogol Period of Russian Literature* Chernyshevsky, in evaluating the work of Belinsky, expresses himself in the following words: "If for each one of us there are subjects so close and dear to the heart, that, in speaking of them, a person tries to impose coldness and calm upon himself, tries to avoid expressions in which his excessively strong love would be heard, knowing in advance that, while observing as much coldness as is possible for him, his speech will be very impassioned; if, we say, for each one of us there are such subjects dear to the heart, then the criticism

In his article "*A Great Heart*", the first chapters of which were printed in the March issue of *Russkoye Bogatstvo*<sup>143</sup> and to which I will refer again later, Mr. Vengerov refers to the late Vasily Botkin as the *source of Belinsky's intellectual stimulation*. In some respects the appellation is justified. But it would be very interesting to discover whether Botkin's attitude to art was marked, and if so to what extent, by the characteristic that we find in Belinsky's attitude to art.\* I doubt very much that it could be proved; in any case it is absolutely certain that none of the Westerners of the forties showed this characteristic in their outlook to the extent to which it was developed in Belinsky. In this respect he was closer to the Russian enlighteners of the sixties than any other of his contemporaries.

And not only in this respect. Mr. Vengerov in the article, "*A Great Heart*", which I have just quoted, writes:

"After all, the really great people are those who are not merely great in themselves, but who reflect the greatness of an age. The significance of Belinsky would be secondary if he reflected only Stankevich, only Botkin, only Bakunin, only Granovsky and only Herzen. But if simultaneously, and with respect to most of them with infinitely more power and brilliance, he reflected Stankevich, Botkin, Bakunin, Granovsky, and Herzen, it means that he was the centre-point of a great age, the expression of the finest moment of Russian culture, which produced a galaxy of great writers who made Russia the equal of humanity's greatest literary powers."

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of the Gogol period [i.e., the writings of Belinsky.—G. P.] holds one of the first places among them.... For this reason we shall speak of the criticism of the Gogol period as coldly as possible: there is a degree of respect and sympathy, at which all praise is rejected as something which does not express the whole fullness of one's feelings."

The other example is even more significant. In 1856 A. I. Levitov, who was then still studying at the Medico-surgical Academy, was exiled as an administrative measure first to Vologda, then to Shenkursk. He had a difficult time, of course, both materially and spiritually. The friends who corresponded with him tried in every way they could to keep his spirits up. In April 1859 one of them, a certain Fidelin, advising him to continue with the writing that he had taken up, wrote: "Remember Belinsky and take heart.... Read, read, get hold of books.... There are many books being published at the moment, and all of them good; again I ask you to remember Belinsky. I would like to send you something, but to tell you the truth.... No, there's nothing to waste time telling the truth about—as soon as I get my hands on a silvet ruble, I promise that I will send you the first part of Belinsky's works a once." (Cf. pp. LXVI-LXVII of F. D. Nefyodov's article "Alexander Ivanovich Levitov", included in the first volume of A. I. Levitov's *Collected Works*, published by K. T. Soldatenkov.) So great was the importance of Belinsky for the *raznochintsi* of that period.

\* I am speaking, of course, of the forties, and not of the period when Botkin was friendly with Fet and set the censor to hound those who wrote for the *Sovremennik*.

This is both true and quite untrue. It is perfectly true that Belinsky "*reflected*" Stankevich, Botkin, Bakunin, Granovsky, Herzen, and many more progressives of his time, i.e., in other words, it is perfectly true that he reflected what he had in common with all of them taken together and with each one taken separately. But this did not prevent him from "*reflecting*", primarily and most vividly, himself as a particular individual, with all his individual characteristics. And in discussing the part played by Belinsky in the history of the development of Russian thought one can and must, as I see it, ask oneself: *did not his individual characteristics, his personal traits, have some significance for history in general?* Only by putting the question this way can we determine in all its fullness the role played in history by a great man.

Then let us examine these characteristic traits.

In his way of thinking Belinsky stood on the *extreme Left* of our Westerners of the forties. Not for nothing did Herzen in his *Diary* call him a *fanatic*, a *man of extremes*. A passionate fighter, a "Jew" in his hatred of "philistines", he could not, for instance, forgive Herzen his almost-friendly relationships with the Moscow Slavophiles. When Herzen began his argument with Belinsky on this subject, the latter found that his explanations "reek of moderation and worldly prudence, which are the beginning of decadence and corruption".\* Of another of his friends, Granovsky, he spoke with great praise, adding only that he had but one fault—his moderation! Granovsky in turn was even more shocked than Herzen by Belinsky's "extremes".

"Belinsky and Granovsky shared a great friendship," says Kavelin in his memoirs, "but I do not think that they shared any direct sympathies, or that they could have. They were two completely opposite natures.... Granovsky always spoke of Belinsky with great respect and love, but added that he would get carried away and taken to extremes. If these natures had not been thrown into a close union by external circumstances, by the nobility of the aims they shared, by their personal irreproachability and the desperate weight of the ideas, knowledge and literature pressing down from above, then Belinsky and Granovsky would doubtless have parted company as Granovsky was later to part company with Herzen."\*\*

From Mr. Pypin's *Belinsky, His Life and Correspondence* we learn that Granovsky and Belinsky often argued about the French Revolution and that Granovsky did not agree with Belinsky's opinion "about R.", i.e., about Robespierre. This is quite understandable, and merely serves to confirm once more Kavelin's

\* Cf. Pypin, *Belinsky, His Life and Correspondence*, Vol. II, p. 180.

\*\* Ibid., Vol. II, p. 230.

idea that in different social circumstances these men would have parted company with each other.

Mr. Vengerov, and not he alone, would like to smooth over many of the "extremes" in the character and particularly in the views of Belinsky and to make him what the Germans call *salonfähig*.<sup>\*</sup> We know, for instance, that when he broke to some extent with Hegel's philosophy, which had meant so much to him before, Belinsky went over to *socialism*.

"You know my nature," he wrote to Botkin, "always going to extremes.... I have now reached a new extreme, the idea of *socialism*, which has become for me the idea above all ideas ... the alpha and omega of faith and knowledge ... for me it has absorbed history, religion, and philosophy. And therefore I now explain in terms of it my own life, your life, and the lives of all whom I have met on life's path."

It is evidently this circumstance that Mr. Vengerov has in mind when he says in his article:

"The very best way in which to describe the outlook of the Belinsky and Herzen circle would be to call them 'socialists'. But I am shy of this appellation, which was later to acquire a new and bellicose inflection. I, on the contrary, now mean to show that 'socialism' in the later, aggressive sense, was alien to the people of the forties. Belinsky calls himself a 'socialist' in one of his letters, but only in the sense of a man who is interested primarily in 'social' questions. I shall therefore take the liberty of calling our Westerners of the forties not 'socialists', but 'socially oriented', and then the term will include both Herzen and Belinsky, and writers who were very peace-loving, like Grigoryevich, Turgenev, Dostoyevsky, Saltykov, Nekrasov and so on."

Mr. Vengerov obviously had an incorrect notion of Belinsky's character, for as we have seen, Belinsky was always "*aggressive*" in his enthusiasms.

"I am starting to love mankind like a Marat," he wrote of himself: "to make the smallest part of it happy, I think I would destroy the rest by fire and sword...."

If we take this *Marat-like* love for mankind together with his passion for Robespierre mentioned above you will agree, ladies and gentlemen, that Belinsky's socialism contained extremely aggressive elements.

But *Russkoye Bogatstvo* does not wish to agree with this and, in the person of Mr. Vengerov, it is doing all it can to remove the bold colours from the portrait of our great writer. And, incidentally, Mr. Vengerov calls upon the testimony of Shchedrin with this aim in mind.

Shchedrin once wrote:

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\* [decorous]

"We were inundated with faith in mankind from the France of Saint-Simon, Cabet, Fourier, Louis Blanc and in particular George Sand; from there first shone forth our confidence that the golden age was before us, and not behind."

This is what Vengerov has to say on the subject:

"It is not only the facts, but also the general tenor that is of value in this important historical testimony. Although he would seem to be speaking of political and economic theories, in fact it was his heart's memories that were stirred up in the stern old man by his recollections; he speaks not of the 'class struggle', but of *mankind*, not of political economy, but of *faith*, and this faith was accepted not in a dry and logical way, because facts and figures are irrefutable; it shone forth...", etc.

So, we are dealing not with the class struggle, but with mankind; not with political economy, but with faith. Let us put aside, as irrelevant here, the question of Shchedrin's own attitude to "political economy". But it will be useful to determine whether the "class struggle" really did play no part in Belinsky's socialism.

This question will be adequately answered by reading his article about Eugène Sue's novel *The Mysteries of Paris*.<sup>\*</sup> In this article Belinsky regrets that the working people of Paris took up arms in July 1830, since the struggle between the bourgeoisie and the monarchy was none of its, the people's, business:

"In its blind and reckless selflessness the people did not spare itself, fighting to destroy laws that made it no happier and, consequently, were as little its concern as the health of the Chinese Emperor."

Then Belinsky challenges the bourgeois conception of equality:

"In the eyes of the law the French proletarian is equal to the richest property-owner and capitalist, they are both tried by an identical court and if found guilty, punished with an identical punishment; but the trouble is that this equality makes life no easier for the proletarian. The eternal worker of the property-owner and the capitalist, the proletarian is entirely in their hands, is entirely their slave, for it is they who give him work and arbitrarily fix the remuneration for it. This pay is not always enough for the poor worker to buy his daily bread and clothe himself and his family in rags, while the rich owner takes 99 per cent of the pay for himself.... Some equality!"

Finally, Belinsky castigates the heartlessness and greed of the bourgeoisie and points out the sufferings of the people of Paris.

"The misfortunes of the people of Paris surpass beyond all measure even the boldest flights of fancy," he exclaims. "But the sparks of goodness have not yet been quenched in France; they

<sup>\*</sup> [*Les Mystères de Paris*.]

are merely lying beneath the ashes and awaiting a favourable wind to be transformed into a bright and clear flame. The people is a child, but the child is growing and gives promise of becoming a man, full of power and reason.... It is still weak, but it alone carries within it the fire of the nation's life and the fresh enthusiasm of its convictions which has been snuffed out in the educated layers of society...", etc.

I ask you, ladies and gentlemen, what form "*faith in mankind*" is taking here. It coincides wholly and entirely with *faith in the people*, a concept which in its turn coincides completely with the concept of the *working class*. The interests and even the morality of the workers are contrasted with the interests and morality of the bourgeoisie. Is this not the point of view of the class struggle? Is this not that "*narrowness*" of which today's socialists are accused by people who are incapable of grasping certain conceptions and consider *broad-minded* those social views that are in fact *merely unclear, and nothing more*?

I hasten, however, to make one reservation. None of today's socialists would agree with Belinsky that the question of political rights is as little connected with the true interests of the people as is the health of the Chinese Emperor. That is a mistake. Without political rights there can be no broad development of the working-class movement, and that is why in places where they do not exist, the workers must strive with all their might to win them. That is why at home in Russia the first big step taken by the workers' movement must be to gain political freedom. Belinsky did not understand the connection between the economic interests of the working class and its political rights. This was the weak aspect of *his* socialist views, and of *the whole of the socialism of that period, which has now come to be called utopian socialism*. But this did not prevent him from adopting the attitude of the class struggle, or, as Mr. Vengerov expresses it, of *political economy* and making his faith in mankind exclusively faith in the *working class*. In view of this all efforts to make him salonfähig must be acknowledged as completely unjustified.

Now that we have touched upon the question of the class struggle, I cannot go on without trying to demolish a certain association of ideas that has taken fairly firm root not only in the minds of French and German philistines but, also, unfortunately, in the minds of many Russians who consider themselves "*advanced*" people. What I have in mind is the prejudice against the class struggle. People say: "Why defend the interests only of the working class? That is narrow-minded. We must protect the interests of the whole of mankind." But to talk that way is merely playing with words. I would like to put a question to those who play at this game as though it were something very serious: "What do you mean by '*mankind*'?" If you mean working mankind, those

who work themselves and do not live at someone else's expense, their interests, generally speaking, coincide with the interests of the working class. But if you mean those who cannot exist without exploiting the labour of others, just as a parasite cannot live without sucking the juices of others, then I take leave to doubt that people who strive for goodness and truth could espouse the interests of *this* so-called mankind. The French Revolution of the last century was an event of great importance for the whole civilised world, although it was *a struggle between the estates*—a struggle between the third estate on the one hand and the nobility and the clergy on the other. And what was the third estate? "Toute la nation moins les privilégiés,"\* answered the French revolutionaries of the time. This was a just description and you will agree, ladies and gentlemen, that in defending the interests of the whole nation *minus the "privileged"*, these revolutionaries were in no way showing themselves to be "narrow-minded". But the socialists of today can give exactly the same reply. What are the interests of the working class? They are the interests of all those who do not live by the exploitation of others' labour. Again, it is the whole nation, or rather, *all nations moins les privilégiés*, minus the exploiters. The interests of the exploiters are a negative quantity; to subtract them from the common interests of the whole people means to add something positive to the interests of the latter. By declaring war on war, we strive for peace; by declaring war on economic exploitation, we take up the interests of the working class, *but by the same token defend the interests of the whole of mankind*. It is a great pity that Mr. Vengerov is not aware of this incontestable truth, which was revealed so glaringly and so clearly as a result of the social movement of our age.

But let us return to Belinsky.

Herzen relates in *My Past and Thoughts* that Skobelev, the governor of the SS Peter and Paul Fortress, when he met the famous critic on the Nevsky Prospect would say to him in jest: "When will we be seeing you? I've got a warm casemate waiting for you; I've been keeping it specially!" This nice little joke on the part of the prison governor demonstrates vividly the view that the "*ruling circles*" of the day held of Belinsky. They considered him an extremely dangerous man. You have all heard, of course, of the episode that was immortalised in Naumov's painting *Belinsky Before His Death*. This is how it happened. In February 1848 the then head of the notorious Third Department, Dubbelt, invited Belinsky to visit him and explain himself. The latter was already very ill and could not leave the house. He was left in peace for a while; but on March 27 a gendarme appeared at his

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\* ["The whole nation minus the privileged."]



house with a new invitation. It is the appearance of this gendarme that Naumov depicted. This is how one of Belinsky's friends recounts the impressions left by the visit.

"Belinsky, who could no longer get up from his chair, asked me in a voice that was breathless with agitation and weakness ... to find his former teacher Popov ... [who was then serving in the 3rd Department.—G. P.] and discover what he was wanted for. When I came to Popov, I told about Belinsky's serious illness which confined him to his chair, and asked what they wanted of him. Popov recalled Belinsky's childhood with tenderness, expressed his sympathy for his illness, and asked me to reassure the sick man and explain to him that he was being summoned not for some personal reason or accusation, but as one of the most outstanding men of Russian literature—simply in order for him to make the personal acquaintance of the head of the department (where Popov worked), who was by virtue of his position *in charge* of Russian literature."

On the day of Belinsky's funeral the few friends who accompanied his body to the Volkov cemetery were joined, as Panayev recounts in his memoirs, by "three or four strangers who suddenly appeared from nowhere. They stayed at the cemetery to the very end of the ceremony and watched all the proceedings with great curiosity, even though there was nothing at all to watch". And when Belinsky's friends had the idea of organising a lottery to sell his library—for the benefit of his family, which was left without means of support—and when one of them broached the subject to the afore-mentioned Popov, this is what happened:

"When he heard of Belinsky's death, Popov expressed his regret at the untimely death of such an outstanding critic, but as soon as he was told of the lottery, his face changed completely and he refused in a tone of great irritation. His words meant in effect that for him the name of Belinsky was equivalent to the name of some criminal against the state...."

Belinsky never did anything *criminal* even from the point of view of our laws, which declare to be criminal actions that everywhere in the West are considered not merely permissible, but even perfectly normal. However, by regarding Belinsky as a criminal against the state, the Third Department was demonstrating once again its fine sleuth's nose. And indeed it was bound to regard Belinsky as a criminal. You remember, ladies and gentlemen, the "*Marat-like*" love which Vissarion Grigoryevich felt for mankind; you remember his passion for Robespierre. Now I will add that, extremely nervous and sincere, he could not and did not want to hide his convictions. I will quote from Herzen's memoirs two occasions which were most characteristic in this respect:

"One day he arrived to dine with a writer during Easter week, and they served Lenten fare. 'Have you been so pious for long?' he asked. 'We are eating Lenten food simply for the sake of other people,' said the writer. '*For other people?*' Belinsky asked, turning pale. 'For other people,' he repeated, rising from his chair. 'Where are your other people? I will tell them that they have been deceived, that any open sin is better and more human than this contempt for the weak and uneducated, this hypocrisy which upholds ignorance. And you think that you are free people? You're the same as all the tsars, popes and planters. Good-day, I do not eat Lenten fare for didactic purposes, I have no *people!*'"

And here is the second occasion:

At an evening gathering in the house of the same writer who ate Lenten fare for the sake of "other people", one scholarly gentleman from St. Petersburg University, as Herzen recounts, who had wasted his talents by the pursuit of philosophy and philology, spoke at length on the subject of moderation and accuracy<sup>144</sup> and, touching on Chaadayev's famous "Philosophical Letter" announced that its author was not worthy of respect. Herzen, who was present at the gathering and had been personally acquainted with Chaadayev, disagreed with the scholarly gentleman, explaining how unjust it was to speak so of a man who had expressed his opinion bravely and had been made to suffer for it. The scholarly gentleman answered by referring to the necessity of respecting various "foundations". The dispute dragged on....

"Belinsky suddenly cut me short....," Herzen writes; "he walked up to me, already as white as a sheet, clapped me on the shoulder and said: 'So they've spoken out—the inquisitors and censors, in favour of putting thought on a lead' ... and went on and on. He spoke with a terrible inspiration, peppering serious words with lethal, caustic remarks. 'What sensitivity: they beat people with sticks, yet we do not take offence, exile them to Siberia, yet we do not take offence, but then Chaadayev goes and stings the people's honour, and you must not say a word; speaking is impertinence, a lackey should never speak! Why is it that in more educated countries where, one would think, the sensitivity is more developed than in Kostroma and Kaluga, people do not take offence at words.'

"In enlightened countries,' said the scholarly gentleman with inimitable complacency, 'there are prisons for madmen who insult that which is honoured by the entire people ... and that is just as well.'

"Belinsky drew himself up to his full height, he was terrifying, he was great at that minute; folding his arms on his sick chest and looking straight at the scholarly gentleman, he replied in a harsh voice:

"And in still more enlightened countries there is the guillotine for the execution of those who find it just as well."

"Having said this, he threw himself into an armchair in exhaustion and fell silent. At the word 'guillotine' the host became pale, the guests looked uneasy, and there was a pause. The scholarly gentleman was annihilated...."

Such was the "impetuous Vissarion". Put yourselves in Dubbelt's position, ladies and gentlemen, and say whether he was not obliged, "by the duties of his post and his oath", to regard Belinsky as a criminal against the state?

However, we do not work in the Third Department, we have taken no oath to be faithful gendarmes of His Petersburg Majesty, and we are permitted to look at the matter from the other side. In our eyes the "criminal" way of thinking of the "impetuous Vissarion" is just one of his many claims on our love and our respect. Moreover, another of the reasons for which we love Belinsky is the fact that in the eyes of Dubbelt he was a *criminal*, and could not have been otherwise. It was only death which saved Belinsky from very close acquaintance with the Third Department. Imagining the doubtful pleasures of such acquaintance, we can repeat after Nekrasov with even more strength of feeling:

*And, as to your long-suffering shade I pray,  
My teacher and my mentor, to your name  
Let me this all-too-modest tribute pay.*

Now I will pass to the second part of my lecture. Having reminded you of the way Belinsky *felt*, I would now like to remind you how he *thought* and to speak of his main preoccupation throughout his conscious life.

Again I quote Nekrasov, addressing Belinsky:

*When all was stagnant everywhere in Russia,  
Slumbering, grovelling ignominiously,  
Your mind teemed with ideas, and you mapped out  
New roads ahead, toiling determinedly.*

Is the poet right in speaking of "new roads ahead" explored by Belinsky?

Even those who value Belinsky chiefly for his "*great heart*" are aware that it was Belinsky who led Russian literary criticism onto a new road. What he did for literary criticism is of itself enough to justify our claim that Nekrasov exaggerates nothing in his words. But Belinsky's lively and capable mind strove to explore new roads not only in the field of literary criticism. Belinsky also worked unflaggingly in the social and political sphere. His attempt to strike a new road in this area merits even more attention than that given to his literary criticism.

This attempt was closely linked to Belinsky's enthusiasm for Hegel's philosophy, the meaning of which we should like to clarify at this point.

To grasp this meaning we must first have some conception of the era in which Belinsky's youth passed. He was fifteen years old when the Decembrist uprising took place. This uprising was discussed all over Russia and, as could be expected, made a deep impression on this fiery, unusually gifted, and precocious young man. After December 14, there was a marked increase in the reaction that had already been very strong at the end of Alexander I's reign.

"The moral level of society declined," Herzen said, "all development was halted, and all that was most advanced and energetic was effaced from life. The rest, frightened, weak, and lost, were petty, and empty; the dregs of the Alexandrian generation now occupied pride of place."

It is not difficult to imagine the moral condition of those people who maintained the best traditions of the preceding period and suddenly found themselves totally helpless in the struggle for their ideals.

"The years immediately following 1825 were dreadful," Herzen wrote elsewhere. "Ten years or so were needed for men to recover from this enslavement and persecution."\*

What did the young Belinsky experience during this difficult decade? Although we have very few facts on which to construct a detailed answer to this question, we do have Belinsky's own testimony, which is as invaluable as everything else this uncompromisingly honest man said about himself. According to him, in his youth he was filled with heroic strivings, a profound hatred of the existing social order, yet *at the same time, an agonising awareness of being completely insignificant*. There could be only two ways out of this: first, total indifference, and abandoning his lofty strivings for an ideal or, second, a passionate search in political literature, science, philosophy for an explanation of the difficult present and indications of a better future. Belinsky and his friends turned to philosophy.

Hegel's idealist philosophy reigned supreme in neighbouring Germany during this period. When Belinsky became acquainted with this philosophy, it took possession of him completely and left a deep impression on the entire future development of his thought.

Why did it have such a great influence on him?

For the same reason that it dominated the freshest, most dynam-

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\* *Du développement des idées révolutionnaires en Russie*, Paris, 1851, p. 97.

ic minds in Germany, and to a certain extent throughout Western Europe, during this period. Because Hegelian philosophy focused and concentrated all that had been accomplished by preceding philosophical thought and emanated rays that lit the way for the civilised world's intellectual and moral development. This may seem an exaggeration, and so I hasten to mention Strauss, Bruno Bauer, Feuerbach, Lassalle, Engels, and Marx. These men possessed outstanding minds, and some of them were men of genius: they all contributed greatly to our age's intellectual development, and not one of them would deny that he was indebted to Hegel for the powerful method of investigation and any number of highly productive ideas. I would recommend reading Engels' slim volume on Feuerbach, which came out in German in the eighties and was published in Russian in Geneva, in order to judge how men of genius who passed through Hegel's school of thought, but later departed from his point of view, regarded this great thinker.<sup>146</sup>

Naturally, I cannot point out all the aspects of the Hegelian world outlook today, not even its most significant aspects. Time simply does not permit me to do this. I hope, however, that I shall be able to stress its most important aspect. At least I shall try to do so.

In the history of mankind's intellectual development, as in the history of *any* type of development, each consecutive phase is always closely linked with the preceding phase, yet each consecutive phase not only *differs* from, but in many respects is in *contradiction* to the preceding phase. This is a general rule that should be kept in mind when studying any process of development. And this general rule fully justifies itself in the study of the dominant tendency in philosophical thought of the first half of the nineteenth century in comparison to its dominant tendency in the latter half of the preceding century.

With only rare and minor exceptions eighteenth-century philosophy lacked any conception of development as such. This radical deficiency is to be found in the eighteenth-century philosophers' view of nature, as well as of mankind's history. The historical process is a process of development, and therefore it would seem that history can only be studied from an *evolutionary* point of view. However, the philosophers of the preceding century looked on history differently, and even today some people still share these eighteenth-century views.

For the eighteenth-century philosophers the mainspring of historical movement was the development and dissemination of knowledge, enlightenment, or *des lumières*, as they termed it. Of course no one would dream of disputing the relative truth of this view. Even today German Social-Democrats sing in their Marseillaise:

*Der Feind, den wir am tiefsten hassen,  
Der uns umlagert, schwarz und dicht,  
Das ist der Unverstand der Massen,  
Der von des Geistes Schwert durchbricht.\**

In practice, every progressive social figure has always had to reckon with the *masses' lack of development*. But in studying this problem theoretically, we may—in fact, should—ask ourselves: is not the accumulation of knowledge and spread of enlightenment conditioned by certain deeper factors? In other words, when studying this problem theoretically we may and should ask ourselves whether the very accumulation of knowledge and spread of enlightenment should not be seen as *a process of development which is subject to known laws* that can be discovered and determined just as natural laws are studied and determined. If this is *possible*, then mankind's intellectual development can be an object of scientific investigation; if this is *not possible*, then we cannot speak of scientifically studying this development, because *there can be no science if phenomena do not conform to a pattern of laws*.

Reasoning formally, any eighteenth-century philosopher would naturally agree that the phenomena of peoples' intellectual development have their causes like any other phenomena, and can therefore be studied in terms of their conformity to laws. Some of these philosophers, Helvétius for instance, even made highly interesting attempts at studies of this sort. But in the overwhelming majority of cases they continued to see mankind's intellectual development as the last cause of historical movement, and so we can say that their scientific analysis of this movement stopped where it should have begun. That is why *the Enlighteners of the eighteenth century did not have a scientific philosophy of history*.

At one time—for instance, during the period when the famous Encyclopaedia was being published—this circumstance could be ignored. The main historical mission of the eighteenth-century Enlighteners was their intellectual struggle with out-moded views inherited from the era when absolute monarchy and total, unfettered rule of the aristocracy and clergy flourished. It was natural, even very useful in this intellectual struggle to see the *movement of ideas* as the last and deepest cause of the *movement of things* in human society. But then the storm of the Great Revolution broke out; events succeeded each other at breakneck speed and with the unsubdued force of natural phenomena. The public mood changed very frequently, very decisively, and entirely unexpectedly; the development of social life and thought evi-

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\* [The enemy we hate so deeply  
That, dense and sombre, rings us round,  
Is the blind ignorance of the masses,  
But spirit's blade shall hew it down.]

dently not only did not justify the philosophers' bright hopes and favourable prophecies, but was an outright mockery of them. It then became obvious to many people that it was not the movement of ideas that determined the movement of things but the other way around. Then philosophers during the Restoration tried to discover a pattern of laws in mankind's intellectual development\*; historians examined people's thoughts as a product of their social relations, and all those who researched social life increasingly studied it *in terms of its development*.

This transition was most reflected in Hegel's philosophical system. Hegel studied phenomena *in terms of their development*; this is the major aspect of his philosophy, and it is because of this that his philosophy acquired such a powerful and productive influence on the entire course of nineteenth-century intellectual development.

The teaching about development examines phenomena in their transitory nature. It shows the causes for their *appearance*, and discloses the causes that conditioned or should condition, in time, their *disappearance*. For example, an old revolutionary who examines in these terms, let us say, the return to France of the Bourbons, whose reign—it would appear—had been dealt a mortal blow with Louis XVI's deposal and death, should feel a certain relief at the thought that the reaction which replaced the mighty revolutionary impulse in France is only a transitory phenomenon, and will last only as long as the temporary causes that produced it. Once these causes have been disclosed, it will then be possible for this revolutionary to assist their *elimination*, that is, to assist progress to triumph once again. The examination of phenomena in terms of their development, a highly useful method for science, would seem almost deliberately conceived to lend moral support and encouragement to all progressive innovators, whose forces are always very limited at the beginning. Herzen was quite right when he said that Hegel's philosophy was a *genuine algebra of revolution*.<sup>146</sup>

But this algebra of revolution, this mighty weapon for revolutionary thought was much more complex than the simple weapon of negation which had been wielded in the previous century, and its effect on young minds of the time was also bound to be incomparably more complex. Eighteenth-century thought can be characterised by the formula: yea, yea; nay, nay, for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil. This formula allowed for only one attitude toward a given phenomenon: either total condemnation

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\* It was at this time that Saint-Simon attempted to establish his law of three phases (the theological, the metaphysical, and the positive), a law that is usually associated—without good reason—with Auguste Comte. This "law" may be regarded today as one of the best examples of the primitive conceptions of the law-governed nature of historical development at the time.

or total approbation. For instance, the eighteenth-century philosopher could only answer the question of whether the clergy's primacy was good or bad by saying: *it is very harmful*. The historical causes underlying this primacy did not lie within his field of vision. Saint-Simon, on the other hand, saw the clergy from the point of view of that *estate's historical development*. While rejecting the justice of its primacy in his time, Saint-Simon showed its historical services and (here he contradicted the eighteenth-century philosophers) he even exaggerated the importance of these services—a circumstance that in its turn left a definite imprint on his own views and those of his pupils.

I repeat: the doctrines of negation in our own century are much more complex than those in the previous century. Men in the nineteenth century are much more intellectually demanding in their negation than were the contemporaries of Diderot and Voltaire. The noted German writer and revolutionary Arnold Ruge tells how he happened to attend a lecture on religion in his early student days—I do not recall now who the professor was. The professor was very free in treating the subject; “but it was just this that struck me as most unpleasant,” Ruge says, “not because I was religious at the time, but because his superficial negation, typical of the eighteenth century, did not satisfy me”.\* Ruge, who later became a revolutionary, was at the same time an ardent disciple of Hegel's philosophy.

I should add that Hegel himself—for reasons which, if we were to examine them, would lead us very far afield—often interpreted his algebra of revolution in the conservative sense and made use of his famous proposition, “Was wirklich ist, das ist vernünftig”,\*\* to condemn the opposition tendencies of his time.

How did this vital aspect of Hegelian philosophy that I have discussed influence Belinsky, as it was bound to do?

We already know that, despite his youth, he instinctively sensed the superficiality and inadequate foundation of his negation, and—in his own words—he was conscious of his own complete “insignificance”, despite all the ardour of his “abstract” heroism. A man whose negation is firmly founded does not feel insignificant, even though he knows that his ideal will only be realised in the distant future. The study of Hegelian philosophy with its historical view of all phenomena was bound to lead Belinsky to a *clear awareness* of what he had only painfully *sensed* in his heart before: he became fully convinced of the total lack of foundation for his negation. Being by nature passionate and impulsive, he had to go to extremes and so, once he had rejected his previous negation, he condemned all negation in general. In other words,

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\* I quote from memory, but I can vouch for the meaning.

\*\* [“All that is real is rational.”]



from being a fiery negator he had to become an equally fiery protector. This new mood was nourished by memories of the moral anguish he had experienced during the time of his *abstract* heroism, as he now expressed it: instinct for moral self-preservation told him that returning to his previous negation would also mean returning to his moral torment. And so Belinsky became an ardent commentator on the proposition "all that is real is rational", identifying the concept of *the real* with *that which exists*.

Disputing Belinsky's new views, Herzen once said to him, thinking to stun him with his ultimatum: "Do you realise that from your point of view you can show that this monstrous autocracy under which we live is rational and must exist?"

"Without a shadow of a doubt," Belinsky boldly answered.

If Herzen had understood the psychological process taking place in his interlocutor's mind, he could have foreseen Belinsky's affirmative answer. In his enthusiasm for Hegel's philosophy, Belinsky was bound to begin by justifying autocracy, serfdom, and other such infamies, for the very reason that these infamies had tormented him most painfully during the previous phase of his intellectual development.

Need I say, ladies and gentlemen, that this enthusiasm for conservatism was short-lived? This is well known; we need only recall the famous extract from Belinsky's letter to Botkin in which he speaks of his return to negation, and exclaims in a bitterly mocking tone:

"Thank you kindly, Yegor Fyodorych [a joking name for Hegel in Belinsky's circle.—*G. P.*], I bid farewell to your philosophical cap; but with all due respect for your philosophical philistinism, I have the honour to inform you that even if I did manage to climb to the top rung of the ladder of development, I would ask you to account to me for all the victims of the conditions of life and history, for all the victims of chance, superstition, the Inquisition, Philip II, and so forth; or else I would throw myself down headfirst from the top rung...."

The last phase in Belinsky's development, the phase in which he became such a resolute revolutionary, began at the time of his so-called break with Hegel. I have already indicated some of the traits typical of this period of his development. I shall now indicate a few others.

We are accustomed to think that "having bade farewell to Hegel's philosophical cap", Belinsky totally abandoned Hegel's *philosophy*. This is a serious error. In fact, he only rejected its conservative side, and now absorbed more fully the deeper significance of Hegelian philosophy, that is, as "*an algebra of revolution*". Sharply criticising his own article on the Borodino anni-

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\* Pypin, *ibid.*, II, p. 105.

versary, he now said, however (and our more or less "advanced" legal writers usually forget this):

"Of course, the idea which I attempted to develop in the article on Glinka's book on the Battle of Borodino is basically correct, but I should also have developed the idea of negation as an historical right, the first, sacred one without which the history of mankind would have turned into a stagnant and stinking morass—and if I could not write this, then my *honour* demanded that I write nothing at all."

The idea underlying this article was correct, then. What was this idea? The same fundamental idea of all Hegelian philosophy: *the idea that development is governed by certain laws*. But how could the idea of negation be developed from this point of view and applied to Russian social relations? It had to be shown that the social and political order that oppressed Belinsky and those who shared his point of view could not last forever, that it had only temporary, transitory significance, and that subsequent historical movement would certainly wipe it from the face of the Russian land, just as boldly as it had eliminated the feudal-appanage order. To accomplish this meant to elaborate an integral and systematic philosophy of Russian history. This was impossible without the help of West-European thought, for Russian life was still undeveloped. But West-European thought itself was then—in the forties—at a transitional stage. Hegel's absolute idealism failed to discover the innermost *causes* of historical movement; it could only offer individual, although extremely noteworthy, observations and hints at these causes.\* Without understanding these causes fully, Belinsky could not grasp the *meaning* of historical movement, and therefore he could not base his expectations for the future on real, firm ground. True, in the period under discussion Hegel's idealism was giving way to Feuerbach's materialism; but this materialism was totally inadequate to explain the social and historical process. In this respect Feuerbach was often more of an idealist than Hegel. Belinsky could not therefore rely on Feuerbach's materialism to develop his idea of negation systematically. He hated contemporary Russian "*reality*" to the depths of his soul, but he did not and could not know how its destruction would come about, and he suffered deeply from his ignorance; his faith in a better future was often badly shaken.

"Alas, my friend," he wrote to Botkin, "without society there is no friendship or love, there are no spiritual interests, only impulses towards all this—uneven, feeble, pointless, painful, unreal impulses. The whole of our lives and all our relations serve

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\* I should like to refer those who are interested in this problem to my article "Zu Hegel's sechzigstem Todestag" in *Neue Zeit*, November, 1891.<sup>147</sup>

as the best example of this bitter truth.... Mankind is abstract soil for the development of the individual spirit, and we have all grown out of this abstract soil, we who are the unfortunate Anacharses of the new Scythia. That is why we yawn, elbow each other aside, dash about, are caught up in everything without sticking to anything, and devour everything without feeling satisfied."\*

In another letter he says:

"There is no activity without a goal, no goal without interests, and no life without activity. The source of interests, goals, and activity is the substance of social life. Is this clear, logical, and true? We are people without a homeland—no, even worse than without a homeland; we are people whose homeland is an illusion, and is it surprising that we ourselves are illusions, that our friendship, our love, our aspirations, our activity are also illusions?"\*\*

I ask you, ladies and gentlemen, to pay attention to this trait in Belinsky's psychology: it is very instructive because it provides us with valuable material for solving questions like those about which people argued so heatedly in Russia only a year or two ago.<sup>148</sup> Bidding farewell to Hegel's "cap", Belinsky returned to his negation of Russian "reality". But he did not succeed in giving his negation a theoretical basis, in "*developing its idea*", that is, in finding forces in our social life that, by developing further, would certainly lead to elimination of its existing deformities. That is why he developed an agonising awareness of his *groundlessness*. Russia seemed an "*illusion*" to him in the sense that he saw no healthy elements in it capable of further healthy development. But because he reasoned too clearly and had passed through too good a school to deceive himself and lull himself to sleep with fantastic disquisitions on the subject of the *role of the individual in history*, he stated with his usual consistency that "*we*", that is, the people of negation are "*illusions*". In consequence, he could only regret that intellectual development that made it impossible for him to reject negation.

"Reality awakened us and opened our eyes, but to what purpose?... Better if it had closed them forever, and quenched the anxious desires of the heart avid for life with the sleep of insignificance..."

*The third spring—the cold spring of oblivion—*

*That soothes the fever of the heart most sweetly....*\*\*\*<sup>149</sup>

This mood was by no means confined to Belinsky: all his fellow-thinkers and even the best of his opponents, that is, the most

\* Pypin, II, pp. 114-15.

\*\* Pypin, II, pp. 122-23.

\*\*\* Pypin, II, p. 124.

highly educated and sensitive Slavophiles, experienced it. We find it very clearly expressed in Herzen's *Diary*:

"Will people in ages to come understand and appreciate the full horror and tragedy of our existence?" Herzen exclaimed in despair. "Will they understand why we are lazy, why we seek after all sorts of diversions, why we drink ... etc.? ... Why do we not forget our sadness in moments of ecstasy?... Oh, let them stop and reflect in sorrow before the gravestones beneath which we will sleep, for we have earned their sorrow! Did any other country ever have such an era? Not even Rome in the last centuries of its existence.... Rome had its sacred memories, its past, and finally everyone shamed by his country's condition could find solace in the bosom of a young religion, which was then still pure and poetic. We are dying from the emptiness and disorder of the past, as well as of the present—from the absence of any common interests...."\*

But he then wrote further on:

"Today I read an article on *Dead Souls* in *Otechestvenniye Zapiski*; it included some excerpts.... Re-reading the descriptions of the Russian landscape (summer and winter on the road) overwhelmed me with a feeling of boundless sadness, I saw the Russian steppe so vividly before me, and the contemporary question cropped up again so painfully that I almost broke into tears. Our sleep is a long and heavy one. Why have we awakened? Better to sleep like everything around us!"

Not seeing a single healthy element capable of development (and consequently, of *negation*) in the reality around him, Belinsky became embittered even against those whose situation had always aroused great compassion in him, and for whom he was ready to shed the last drop of his blood: I am speaking of *the peasants and of the Russian people generally*. After Koltsov's death he wrote in a letter to Botkin:

"Koltsov's death affected you deeply. What can be done about it? These things affect me differently; I am like a soldier in the heat of battle: if a friend and brother falls, I do not feel anything, it is just an ordinary occurrence. That is probably why such a loss affects me more deeply once I have had a chance to get used to it, rather than at the beginning. There is nothing to be said about Koltsov's father: this sort of incident might stir up energetic writers and fill them with mighty indignation somewhere else, but not here. And is the father to blame for the fact that he is a moujik? And has he done something extraordinary? I cannot feel any hostility for a wolf, a bear, or a mad dog, even if one of them has torn to shreds a work of art or a work of genius, nor

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\* This unfortunate side of the history of our intelligentsia's development merits closer study by those who have been waxing eloquent on the role of the individual in history, forgetting that this role is determined in the final analysis by the "substance of social life".

can I feel hostility for a steam engine that runs over a man. That is why Christ prayed for his executioners, saying: 'They know not what they do'. I cannot pray for wolves or bears or mad dogs or Russian merchants and moujiks, or for Russian judges and policemen, but neither can I feel personal hatred for any of them."\*

This psychological inability to respect the people because of their Asiatic backwardness, together with an ardent love for this same people and an inability to feel morally at ease because of their sufferings was undoubtedly the most tragic trait shared by Russian Westerners at that time. It left its imprint on what can be termed their *practical policies*, and strongly influenced the development of the next generation's ideas. It deserves a separate analysis, and I shall speak of it here only inasmuch as it determined the further course of Belinsky's intellectual development.

We know that when he returned to his negation of reality he became attracted to socialism, and was carried away by it with his usual passion. But this fiery enthusiasm lasted only a few years. In the late forties he regarded socialism very sceptically and even "*parted company*" with it. In a letter to Botkin dated February 6, 1847 he praised Littré because "he belongs neither to the clever knaves at the *Journal des Débats* or the *Revue des deux Mondes*,"\*\* nor to the socialists" who, he now said, had been born of the fantasies of Rousseau's genius. This same letter contains an interesting appraisal of Louis Blanc:

"Incidentally, I read an excerpt from the first volume of Louis Blanc's *History of the Revolution in the Gazette de France*. It gives his opinion of Voltaire! By all the saints, he is another Shevryov! Everything Louis Blanc says in criticism of Voltaire is true, but the stupid thing is that he does not judge him, but condemns him as if he were a man of our time, a contributor to the *Journal des Débats*. Louis Blanc is an historian of current events; but it would appear that he should not touch past history."

In a letter to Annenkov (February 15, 1848) he expresses himself even more strongly about Louis Blanc:

"I am now reading Voltaire's novels and mentally spitting every minute in the face of that imbecile, that ass, that beast, Louis Blanc...."\*\*\*

Ladies and gentlemen, please take note of the fact that when Belinsky wrote the article about Eugène Sue's *The Mysteries of Paris* referred to earlier, he adopted the viewpoint of Louis Blanc, for whom he had great respect at this time. Now he sees Louis Blanc as another Shevryov because of the latter's opinion of

\* Pypin, II, p. 157.

\*\* I.e. narrow-minded apologists for the existing bourgeois order.

\*\*\* Again, for Louis Blanc's negative attitude towards Voltaire in his *History of the French Revolution (Histoire de la Révolution Française)*.

Voltaire. Why is this? After all, did not Belinsky acknowledge that the appraisal was true "*as such*"? It was true, but *lacked historical perspective*. The Achilles' heel of socialism during this period was its inability to base itself firmly on the historical point of view, and precisely for this reason it is now called *utopian socialism*. Remaining a Hegelian to the end of his days, Belinsky could not but notice this defect in socialism of that time, and this explains all his irritable attacks on socialists in letters written towards the end of his life. His irritation with utopian socialism, which adopted the viewpoint of *abstract* negation of the existing order of things, became stronger the more painfully he became aware of the need to find a *real and concrete* basis for his negation of *reality* or, if this proved impossible, to acknowledge those few Russians who represented the negative tendency to be "*illusions*". Since utopian socialism did not provide him with material on which to base his negative idea, he "parted company" with socialism and began to examine seriously the *historical role of the bourgeoisie*. His letter to Annenkov dated February 15, 1848, to which I have already referred, contains the following highly important passage:

"My religious friend\* and our Slavophiles helped me a lot to discard my mystic belief in the people. Where and when have the people ever liberated themselves? Everything is always done through individuals. When I called you a conservative in my arguments with you about the bourgeoisie, I was an ass squared, and you were the intelligent one. France's entire future is in the hands of the bourgeoisie, all progress depends on it alone, and the people can only play a passive, auxiliary role at times. When I said in the presence of my religious friend that Russia needs a Peter the Great now, he attacked this idea like a heresy, saying that the people must do everything for itself. What a naive, Arcadian thought! Why not assume that the wolves living in the Russian forests will unite in a well-organised state, establish first an absolute monarchy, then a constitutional one, and finally become a republic? Pius IX took only two years to show what a great man can mean to his country. My religious friend also argued with me that Russia would be far better off without a bourgeoisie. But it is now obvious that Russia's inner process of civil development will begin only when the Russian nobility turns into a bourgeoisie. Poland is the best proof of just how strong a state that does not have a bourgeoisie invested with rights is. What a strange person I am! When I get some mystical nonsense into my head, sensible people rarely manage to knock it out with proofs: I need to get together with mystics, pietists,

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\* We do not know to whom Belinsky was referring, but it may have been Bakunin.

and visionaries, who are obsessed by the same idea, and only then am I dissuaded. My religious friend and our Slavophiles have rendered me a great service. Do not be surprised at the juxtaposition: the best of the Slavophiles regard the people exactly as my religious friend does; they have absorbed these concepts from the socialists and quote George Sand and Louis Blanc in their articles. But enough on this subject!..."\*

This quotation may seem too long, but I could not reduce it because anyone who wants to understand Belinsky's social and political views in the last years of his life should have a fundamental knowledge of the above passage. It has already attracted attention in our literature, but it only served to give rise to an amusing misunderstanding. Mr. Myakotin decided that if Belinsky believed that everything was accomplished through certain individuals, then his viewpoint was identical with that of our present-day subjectivists. This is extremely naive. What "*individuals*" did Belinsky want for Russia, in fact? "Russia needs a Peter the Great now," he said. In other words: Russia needs a Tsar who is inspired by hatred of our "reality". This is very characteristic of Belinsky's views at the period in question. Not having disclosed any progressive elements in the people, without any hope that a protest against our sad reality would emerge from among the people, Belinsky was forced to turn his gaze towards the Tsar's throne. The Tsar at this period, Nicholas I, was obtuse, bad-tempered, and hostile to any progress by the people. There could be no hope placed in him. But Peter the Great was neither obtuse nor hostile to progress; he hauled Muscovite Russia out of its age-long slumber. Therefore we should hope for the appearance of a new Peter the Great. In the latter years of his life Belinsky said more than once that Russia's development had been accomplished *from above, not from below*, i.e., that progress was *initiated by the government, not by the people*.\*\* He also expressed this idea in a letter to Annenkov. This view had an enormous influence on the further development of progressive Russian thought. The revolutionary *raznochintsi* of the sixties and seventies who took up revolutionary struggle against the government no longer thought that their ideals would be realised "*from above*"; they could only become revolutionaries, and remain such, with the firm conviction that the existing order of things would be destroyed "*from below*", i.e., by a popular revolution. That is why they so readily seized on the Slavophiles' idealisation of the Russian people in general, and of certain aspects of the people's eco-

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\* «Анненков и его друзья», стр. 610-612. [Annenkov and His Friends, pp. 610-12.]

\*\* See his article, "St. Petersburg and Moscow", published in the collection, *The Physiology of St. Petersburg* (1845).

conomic and legal life in particular.\* That Belinsky's view had nothing in common with "subjective sociology" is shown by its origin. Whence did our critic derive this view? He arrived at it as a result of seeking to base his idea of negation on *real* (concrete) grounds; not finding any promise of independent progress in the people, Belinsky was forced, against his will, to acknowledge that our development does not come from below, but from above, and consoled himself with the hope that perhaps Nicholas I would at last do something to abolish Russia's major evil at this period—*serfdom*. When rumours circulated at the end of 1847 that Nicholas was in fact preparing to abolish serfdom, Belinsky seized on this rumour and joyfully informed his friends abroad about it. At the same time he was afraid that Russian progressives would frighten the government with their open hostility to it. Belinsky regarded these people as harmful in that they "irritate the government, make it suspicious and ready to see revolt where none exists, and provoke measures that are drastic and fatal for literature and enlightenment". Because of this he was unsympathetic to Shevchenko, then exiled to the Caucasus as a soldier.<sup>161</sup> Such a view might seem very strange coming from Belinsky, the author of the famous letter to Gogol. But anyone who understands the origin of this view must acknowledge that Belinsky arrived at it as a result of seeking to link his negation with the balance of social forces existing in Russia at the time, and not as a result of a "subjective" view of history. But then even Peter the Great, in Belinsky's opinion, had to follow in his activity the dictates and laws of *economic* reality, above all: "Russia's inner process of civil development will begin only when the Russian nobility turns into bourgeoisie." If this is subjectivism, then it is incomprehensible why our Russian subjectivists *today* are so afraid of capitalism. Mr. Myakotin should explain this interesting circumstance to himself and to us.

But to proceed: Belinsky said that Slavophiles see the people exactly as socialists do. This is entirely correct—if we keep in mind that he is speaking of utopian socialists. The Slavophile view of the people had no place for *the element of development*:

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\* For instance, the *obshchina* (commune). The noted Slavophile Y. Samarin wrote in the *Moskvityanin*<sup>160</sup> (1847) (under the pseudonym of M... Z... K...): "The communal principle is the basis of all Russian history, past, present, and future; the seeds and shoots of everything that we see on the surface grow out of its fertile depths." That was the main idea underlying Russian Narodism. Samarin went on to say that the Western world was now demanding the *communal principle* (he had in mind the socialist movement), that this demand *coincides* "with our substance" (the italics are mine), that "in justification of this formula we offer our popular life", and that, finally, this is the point of contact of our history with the history of the West. That is the content of Narodnik polemics against certain "advocates of capitalism" right up to the present.



What is more, I. S. Aksakov effused emotionally on the *Russian people's salutary immobility*. This salutary immobility also produced an emotional response among his fellow-thinkers in an earlier period. The element of development also had very little importance in socialist views at the time. Socialists regarded the existence and development of capitalism as an evil—pure and simple—without realising its revolutionary aspect. In idealising the people, they did not idealise *the capacity for development* they possessed due to their social and economic situation, but idealised the people's entire character at the present moment, a character which could not fail to possess certain unattractive traits inherited from the past. Once he had revealed the Achilles' heel of utopian socialism and placed himself in opposition to it, Belinsky went on, with his usual sharpness, to point out the weak sides of the people's character. He saw the bourgeoisie as the representative of historical movement. Translating this view into today's terms, we could say that Belinsky understood the historical role of capitalism in Western Europe better than the utopian socialists understood it and foresaw its enormous importance in eliminating the out-moded "patriarchal way of life" in *Russia*. True, once he had realised capitalism's role and importance, he immediately went to the other extreme and rejected not only *the Russian serfs*, but also *the French proletariat's* capacity for independent historical activity. This was a serious error. But it was totally insignificant in comparison with the truth contained in Belinsky's new views.

Once Belinsky had rejected utopian socialism, his thoughts began to move in the direction already taken by *Western revolutionary thought*.

Hegel's philosophy was replaced by the philosophy of Feuerbach. Feuerbach's philosophy gave way to the revolutionary scientific socialism of Marx and Engels. *This* socialism gave a reply to all Belinsky's theoretical demands. It based the *concept of negation* on the process of historical development in the social life of contemporary civilised societies and brought this concept—firmly-grounded for the first time—into the ranks of the international proletariat. This proletariat's movement became, as Engels expressed it, the inheritor of German classical philosophy.<sup>152</sup> As a result, "the people" ceased to be a pathetic, superstitious, and inert mass. Under the influence of socialist propaganda, the proletariat is the most vital, thinking component in modern civilised societies. But the people's regeneration is not only taking place in Western Europe. The awakening and development of class-consciousness is occurring before our very eyes in the *Russian* working class as well. This phenomenon, the importance of which would be difficult to overestimate, creates new chances of success for all those who sincerely hate the existing order of

things and are prepared to fight against it. The *idea of negation* is now based in Russia on the process of social development. Our homeland is *no longer an illusion, nor are those people who are striving to win a better future for it illusions*. Only a pathetic decadent can now ask himself: "Why have we awakened?"<sup>163</sup> But decadents do not ask themselves such questions.

If Belinsky were still alive today, he would be at peace with himself at last. He would no longer call himself *the Anacharsis of the new Greece*.<sup>164</sup> He would welcome the Russian proletariat's awakening with his usual passion and inspired words and, as he died, he would sincerely envy those fortunate people who would live to see the proletariat's triumph.

It is already time to conclude, yet I have not yet spoken of Belinsky's activity as a literary critic. I could rightfully not speak about this because its role and significance have been partially dealt with in our legal literature.\* I should only like to point here to what was the main object, the sacred object, of all his intellectual activity, beginning with the period when he first cast off the yoke of "*abstract heroism*" up to the last days of his long-suffering life. This main object of his intellectual activity is the *negation of the abstract, utopian ideal, the striving to develop the idea of negation, basing himself on the law-governed development*

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\* I shall try to briefly outline it here. Our enlighteners of the sixties—Chernyshevsky, Dobrolyubov, and others—regarded Belinsky as their mentor in literary criticism. They were quite right, and I have already said that Belinsky was in many respects their predecessor. But the other aspect of his activity as a literary critic escaped their gaze entirely; that is, his striving to liberate critical verdicts and judgments from the range of the critic's personal tastes and sympathies and place criticism on an *objective, scientific* basis. This striving had already been forcefully expressed in his article on the Borodino anniversary. "We think and firmly believe," he wrote, "that the time of 'oohs and ahs' and exclamation marks and rows of dots to express profound thought where none exists has passed in our literature; that the time has passed when great truths were stated with dictatorial pomposity, but without any foundation or support apart from the personal opinion and arbitrary conceptions of a pseudothinker. The public is beginning to demand thoughts, not opinions.... Opinion reposes on the chance conviction of a chance individual, who is, in himself, an insignificant thing and of no interest to anyone; thought reposes on itself, on its own internal development in accordance with the laws of logic." Here Belinsky again shows that he is firmly rooted in Hegelian idealism. But later, for instance in several articles about Pushkin, he abandons idealism—at least in some passages—and evaluates our great poet as a *representative of the best, most highly educated part of our nobility*. Such criticism is unlike the criticism of the sixties and has nothing at all in common with the "subjective" criticism of our day. It is the embryo of scientific criticism based on the materialist interpretation of history. It goes without saying that the history of Belinsky's literary views is very closely connected with the general history of his philosophical views. This is not the place to explain this connection.<sup>165</sup>

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*of social life itself.* No one has so far examined Belinsky from this aspect, yet at the present time it is more important for us than all the others. For to this day in our country the struggle of people who are seeking to put their negation on concrete ground against the representatives and defenders of *abstract ideals*, those Don Quixotes of our day, has not yet ceased.

# VISSARION GRIGORYEVICH BELINSKY

(1811-48)<sup>156</sup>

[1909]

## I

The life of Vissarion Grigoryevich Belinsky was not rich in external events. By his origin he was a real "*raznochinets*". His father served as a physician first in the Baltic fleet and later in his native town of Chembar. Belinsky was born in 1811 (it has not yet been established whether in February or May) in Sveaborg where the unit was stationed in which his father served. His childhood and adolescence were spent in Chembar and Penza, which left few bright impressions on his soul. His father was an habitual drunkard and his mother, evidently, a narrow-minded shrew. Materially the family was always in very straitened circumstances. Belinsky's father, however, was not without some definite virtues. He had received a much better education than the officials around him, and he continually ran foul of them. D. P. Ivanov, a relative of his, believes that his father's stories about the bureaucrats' chicanery affected the little Vissarion profoundly. Apart from the delights of a civil servant's life, Belinsky could also observe the darker aspects of the life of the gentry. We can say with certainty that the horrors of serfdom made a profound impression on his soul. He was educated first at the Chembar uyezd primary school, then, from the summer of 1825, at the Penza gymnasium, and finally at Moscow University, which he entered in the autumn of 1829. The system of education, however, both at primary and secondary schools and at universities, was extremely unsatisfactory at the time, so that Belinsky owes his extensive knowledge, at any rate of literature, to no one but himself and to some lucky encounters with certain persons in his life. The former teacher of the Penza gymnasium Popov wrote of him: "At the gymnasium he learnt not so much from his classes as from books and conversations. The same thing happened at the university. All his knowledge came from Russian journals, from the twenties on, and from Russian books. What could not be found in these, was supplemented from his conversations with friends. It is true that the intellectual Stankevich in Moscow

had a great influence on his comrades. I believe that he was of more use to Belinsky than the university. On becoming a writer, Belinsky was constantly surrounded by a small circle of people who may not have been great scholars, but possessed up-to-date, lively and interesting information. These men, mostly young, had a great thirst for knowledge, for the good and the honourable. Almost all of them knew foreign languages and read both foreign and Russian books and journals.... In this school Belinsky made great progress."

Prince V. F. Odoyevsky's observations are in complete agreement with this: "Belinsky had nowhere to go for his education in Russia," says he, "the humdrum routine of our universities could not satisfy his highly logical mind; the philistinism of most of our professors could evoke nothing but contempt in him; absurd persecutions—their reason unknown—made him jaundiced, and that jaundice became mixed in with his philosophical development and drove his fearless syllogistics to extremes."

Leaving aside the question of "jaundiced" syllogistics, let us add that Belinsky was not allowed to enjoy fully the pleasure of "the humdrum routine of our universities": in September 1832 he was expelled from the university for "lack of ability". The real reason for his expulsion was his tragedy *Dmitry Kalinin*, in which one of the characters asks the "Father of men" an audacious question about "the serpents, the crocodiles and the tigers living on the flesh and bone of their neighbours" (the reference was to serfdom). The university professors on the censorship committee immediately began to keep an eye, so to speak, on the young author. The tragedy was submitted for censorship in 1831, and in the middle of 1832 the expulsion already took place. Belinsky himself explained the reason for the expulsion as follows: "It was partly due to my own slips and lack of effort, but most of all to a long illness and the scurviness of a certain fat Excellence. These are hard and complicated times: such occurrences are by no means rare...."

All his life Belinsky had to fight poverty. It finally ruined his health, at all times weak, and drove him to an early grave. It also played an even worse joke on him by condemning him to a hard struggle for life, thereby depriving him of the chance to fill in systematically the gaps in his education. This last circumstance placed him in a somewhat incorrect position with regard to the members of the circle, of which Popov speaks in the quotation above, and which had a decisive influence on his intellectual development. This circle, the famous circle of Stankevich, in which an extremely important role was played, after the departure of the latter abroad in the autumn of 1837, by M. A. Bakunin, consisted largely of men of independent means who had possessed a good command of foreign languages since childhood.

Belinsky, who could read French but knew neither English nor German, was compelled to adopt the rather inconvenient position in regard to his friends of a man using them for obtaining access to the foreign literary and philosophical sources. We believe that historians of our literature have not so far taken into account the disadvantages of such a position properly. We may characterise it in brief by pointing out that it sometimes placed Belinsky in the position of a pupil of men who were by far inferior to him intellectually.

This observation is at least true of M. A. Bakunin who, after Stankevich, explained Hegel's philosophy to Belinsky, and to an even greater extent it is true of Katkov who helped our critic to study Hegelian aesthetics. As for N. V. Stankevich, we would not be so bold as to insist that Belinsky was intellectually his superior. Belinsky himself seems to have been inclined to look up to him. This, however, does not prove anything at all. Belinsky did not underestimate himself, but, lacking jealous self-love, he idealised his friends and exaggerated their virtues.\* N. V. Stankevich was undoubtedly a man of outstanding intellect, but he had no reason at all to treat Belinsky somewhat mockingly, as was the case according to I. S. Turgenev. This mocking attitude, which, however, Turgenev himself calls friendly, can only be understood as disapproval, masked as a friendly joke, of those "extremes" which struck all Belinsky's friends so forcibly, A. I. Herzen not excepted. It was Stankevich who nicknamed him "the impetuous Vissarion". It is appropriate, however, to recall here the words of Hegel: nothing great is done without passion. It was because of Belinsky's "impetuous" nature that our critic had a deeper insight into the vexed questions of those times than Stankevich ever acquired.

It is noteworthy that Belinsky was perhaps the only *raznochints* in his circle. It is a known fact that later, too, in the sixties and seventies, *raznochintsi* treated the "vexed questions" with much less detachment than the educated representatives of the nobility. The "impetuous" Belinsky was the forerunner, as it were, of the future "impetuous" literary figures—Chernyshevsky, Dobrolyubov and their followers. It was with good reason that the men of the sixties held Belinsky in such great respect....

After his expulsion from the university and a period of utter poverty, Belinsky found permanent literary work with Nadezhdin. At first he did translations, but in September 1834 he made his debut in the *Molva* as a literary critic with his famous article "Literary Reveries" (an elegy in prose). From then onwards he

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\* In a letter to Botkin he thus spoke of Katkov, half joking: "Do not forget that K. and I are professional rivals, and I by my nature am capable of seeing God knows what in my rival, and less than nothing in myself." This joke contains an indubitable truth.

never stopped writing, first for Nadezhdin, that is, in the *Molva* and the *Teleskop*<sup>157</sup> (1834-36), and then in the *Moskovsky Nablyudatel*<sup>158</sup> (1838-39), *Otechestvenniye Zapiski* (1839-46), and lastly in the *Sovremennik* (1846-48). His literary activity was interrupted for a while (1836-38) only "for reasons beyond his control"—due to the *Teleskop* being suppressed in the autumn of 1836.\*

In the summer of 1843 Belinsky became very friendly with a lady teacher at one of the Moscow institutes, who became his wife in the same year. The nature of his relationship with his wife has not been elucidated to any extent. On this subject Pypin says briefly: "He [Belinsky.—G. P.] brought to this relationship all the fervour that was his distinctive feature: he was full of expectations, his loneliness had to come to an end, the loneliness that depressed him in the midst of difficult external activity; he expected his life to take quite a new turn...."

"A new life of domesticity began for him, full of its own interests and troubles that could only be his own personal worry.... Belinsky continued to work very much, even more than before."

Belinsky's appearance is described by Turgenev as follows: "He was a man of medium height, not very handsome and even ungainly at first sight, rather thin, with a hollow chest and bent head. One of his shoulder-blades was noticeably more prominent than the other. Everyone, physician and layman alike, was immediately struck by all the main symptoms of tuberculosis in him.... In addition (in his last years) he coughed almost continuously. His face was small, of pale reddish colour, his nose irregular, sort of flat, his mouth slightly crooked, particularly when he opened it, and his teeth were small and set close to each other; his thick blond hair fell in a tuft on his white and splendid, if low brow. I have never seen more beautiful eyes than Belinsky's. These eyes, blue with flecks of gold deep in the pupils, were half closed by eyelashes at most times, but they grew big and flashed in moments of enthusiasm; in moments of merriment they took on a charming and happy-go-lucky expression of kindness. Belinsky's voice was weak and a little husky, but pleasant; he spoke with peculiar stresses and aspirations, 'insistently, in hurried agitation' (Mr. Nekrasov's verse). His laughter was open-hearted and unrestrained as a child's. He liked walking up and

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\* Let us add that Belinsky published a poem in the *Listok* in 1831, in 1839 he wrote a five-act drama *The Fifty-Year-Old Uncle, or a Strange Illness*, published several articles in the *Literary Supplement* to the *Russky Invalid* in the same year and an article (about A. D. Kantemir) in the *Literaturnaya Gazeta* (Nos. 6, 7 and 8) in 1845. Further, in the same year he wrote the article "Moscow and St. Petersburg" for Part I of *The Physiology of St. Petersburg*, a collection of articles, and in 1846 his article "Thoughts and Remarks on Russian Literature" appeared in the *Peterburgsky Sbornik*. At that time he also wrote an article about A. V. Koltsov, published in the collection of poetry by the latter, and the brochure *Nikolai Alekseyevich Polevoi*.

down the room tapping a snuff-box with Russian tobacco with the fingers of his small and shapely hands. Those who saw him only in the street hurrying along in an uneven gait close to the buildings, wearing a warm cap, an old racoon overcoat and down-at-the-heel galoshes, and looking around him with the bashful severity peculiar to nervous persons, were not likely to form a correct view of him.... In the street, among strange people, Belinsky was easily confused and felt at a loss. At home he usually wore a grey coat lined with cotton-wool and was in general very neat...."

It should be added here that, according to Turgenev, the well-known lithographic portrait of Belinsky does not give an accurate idea of his appearance.

## II

Belinsky's life, poor in external events, was marked by some real storms in the intellectual domain. The significance of these storms is not yet clear to many of his admirers. The latter have been and still are embarrassed by that period in Belinsky's intellectual development during which he deemed it necessary to reconcile himself to contemporary Russian reality. This period is usually blamed on Hegel and most often characterised by the words "a mistake", "an error", "a misunderstanding", etc. In actual fact this period is striking proof of the colossal power of Belinsky's intellect and excellent confirmation of Prince Odoyevsky's words: "Belinsky was one of the highest philosophical organisations that I have ever encountered in life."

To realise this, one must first understand clearly the historical significance of Hegel's philosophy, the study of which constituted such an important epoch in Belinsky's intellectual life.

The French Enlighteners of the eighteenth century firmly believed in the power of reason and were no less firmly convinced that "opinion rules the world", that is, that the course of the development of ideas determines the course of social development. The tremendous events of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries undermined the belief in the power of "reason", and the more perceptive men arrived at the conviction that the course of the development of ideas does not determine the course of social development but, on the contrary, is determined by it. This marked the beginning of a new stage in the history of social science; it would be more correct to say that then for the first time there appeared the possibility of firmly substantiating this science. The Restoration period is characterised by persistent attempts to discover *conformity with laws* in the course of historical development in general and of mankind's intellectual development in particular (let us recall the famous "law of three phases" of Saint-Simon-Auguste Comte). The most outstanding historians of



that epoch regarded people's views as the product of their social relations, and all students of social life and literature, one after another, adopted *the point of view of development*. This process can be observed not only in France, where it was caused by the course of historical events mentioned above, but also in Germany, which watched these events closely and to a certain extent participated in them. German idealist philosophy as represented by Schelling and Hegel was evolutionary par excellence.

It should be noted, however, that in German idealist philosophy, particularly in Hegel's philosophy, the doctrine of development acquired a *dialectical character*. Dialectics is also a doctrine of development, but it has always been alien to the one-sidedness peculiar to the vulgar teaching of evolution which, after the downfall of Cuvier's catastrophe theory, predominated among nineteenth-century naturalists and from the latter passed to men studying *social* problems. Hegel took a firm stand against the famous thesis: "nature does not make leaps." He said that people who supported this thesis saw only one of the moments of the process of development. In reality, *quantitative changes*, gradually accumulated, eventually become *qualitative*, and such transitions proceed through *leaps*. We know that in biology at present the so-called theory of leap-like development is widespread. Hegel would say that it confirms one of the basic tenets of his dialectics, and he would be quite right.

We cannot go into a detailed discussion of this subject here. Suffice it to note that the Hegelian, i.e., the *dialectical*, doctrine of development had a way of putting in the proper perspective not only the "leaps" (changes of quality), but also the process of gradual change (changes of quantity) that prepared them. In view of this one cannot fail to recognise that Herzen was right in calling Hegel's philosophy the algebra of revolution. Hegel said that the "world spirit" never stands still. "It constantly goes forward, since going forward is its nature." We therefore see that Hegel's followers had no logical grounds at all for succumbing to the disappointment in the power of reason pointed out earlier. On the contrary, Hegel's philosophy seems to be invented for the specific purpose of relieving thinking men of the burden of this disappointment. That was why it exerted such a tremendous influence on German, and not only German, young men of that time.

However, those men who proceeded from Hegel's philosophy in their drive forward could no longer be satisfied in their struggle with obsolete views by an appeal to some abstract principle, for example, the principle of eternal justice, etc. No, this sort of appeal was only worthy of the "metaphysicians". A man of progress, having assimilated the spirit of Hegel's dialectical philosophy, had to make certain first of all that his "subjective" tendencies

were mere expressions of the "profound inner work" performed in society by the movement of the "world spirit". Unless supported by such work, the subjective tendencies were recognised as arbitrary, "illusory" and doomed to failure from the start.

It was a mistake to believe that Hegel's famous words "all that is rational is real, and all that is real is rational" were an expression of conservatism. There was a misunderstanding here caused by unfamiliarity with Hegel's terminology. According to Hegel, by no means everything that exists is real. He said: "Die Wirklichkeit steht höher als die Existenz" (reality is higher than existence). Chance existence is not real existence. Only that which is necessary is real. And in the final analysis, only the eternal movement of the "world spirit" forward is necessary. The "mole-like" work of the "world spirit" undermines the existing order, turns it into a form which is devoid of any "real" content and necessitates the emergence of a new order which comes into a fatal collision with the old one.

Not all Hegel's pupils thoroughly understood the dialectical nature of his philosophy. Moreover, he himself, as an old man, was frequently untrue to dialectics in his attitude to socio-political questions. His philosophy was not only a dialectical system. It also purported to be a *system of absolute truth*, and this claim constituted the *conservative element* in Hegel's philosophy. According to his doctrine, every philosophy is an ideal reflection of its time. If a thinker found absolute truth, that means that he lived at a time to which an "absolute", i.e. *perfect* social order corresponded. Since "absolute" truth cannot become obsolete, since *perfect* social order cannot turn out to be *imperfect*, it follows that the desire to change this order is a rebellion against the "world spirit". Of course, even an "absolute" order may undergo certain improvements as to particulars, but on the whole it must remain just as unshakeable as the "absolute" truth expressed by it.

In his youth Hegel sympathised with the Great French Revolution, but as the years went by his love of freedom gradually weakened while the inclination to live in peace with the existing order of things grew ever stronger. This tendency is felt particularly strongly in his *Philosophie des Rechts*. This work abounds in ideas that are worthy of a genius, and at the same time it astounds one by the author's obvious efforts to reconcile his philosophy with Prussian conservatism. Particularly instructive in this respect is the Introduction, in which the famous thesis: "all that is rational is real, and all that is real is rational" is given quite a different interpretation from the one given in the *Logic*. According to the Introduction, a man who has understood reality and discovered the reason concealed in it does not rebel against it, but reconciles himself to it and delights in it. Such a man does not give up his subjective freedom; only his subjective free-

dom does not manifest itself in discord with that which exists but in agreement with it. In general, discord with that which exists, disagreement between cognisant reason and the reason embodied in reality, is only caused by an incomplete understanding of that reality, by the errors of abstract thought. Half-knowledge incites men against the reality around them, whereas genuine knowledge is reconciled with it. Thus reasons Hegel in the Introduction mentioned above. We would ask the reader to note that the expression "*reconciliation with reality*" (*Die Versöhnung mit der Wirklichkeit*) is used here by Hegel himself.

### III

This shows how wrong those friends of Belinsky were who insisted, as Granovsky and Stankevich did, that he had been led to a reconciliation with reality by his misunderstanding of Hegel. It was indeed a case of misunderstanding; but Belinsky is no more to blame for it than Hegel himself—the Hegel who declared the "*absolute*" significance of his philosophy forgetting the basic idea of his *dialectics: everything is fluid, everything changes*. It may very well be that, if Belinsky had possessed a command of German and enough time for a systematic study of Hegelian philosophy, he would have understood its genuine, that is, dialectical, nature much sooner and with less difficulty. It may very well be—and in our view is indisputable—that Bakunin, who did not have a dialectical mind, by his influence prevented Belinsky from understanding that Hegel was untrue to his own philosophy in declaring it to be a system of absolute truth. Still it should be remembered that Belinsky's "reconciliation" with reality at any rate did not contradict the Hegel whom we find in the *Philosophie des Rechts*. This is all too readily forgotten by those who disdainfully shrug their shoulders speaking of Belinsky's "error": that error was made by Belinsky following Hegel.

And yet, how could this error be made, even following Hegel, by the young Belinsky, whose impressions of our Russian "reality" based on his experiences of childhood and youth were far from bright? To answer this question, one has to be familiar with Belinsky's mood in the period immediately preceding his fascination with Hegel. Later he said himself that Schiller's early works *The Robbers*, *Fiesco*, *Cabal and Love* inspired him with "a wild hostility towards social order in the name of an abstract ideal of society, divorced from geographical and historical conditions of development, and built on thin air". *Don Carlos* influenced him in the same direction. "*Don Carlos*," he said, "cast me into abstract heroism, apart from which I despised everything ... and in which, inspite my unnatural and intense rapture I was conscious of being completely insignificant." This confession of

Belinsky's is highly important for the history of his intellectual development. What is most important in it is the fact that the attitude characterised by it, accompanied by the realisation of his impotence, could not have been the young Belinsky's personal trait: certainly he was not alone in realising himself to be "*completely insignificant*". All those thinking Russian men who were not inclined to delight in the existing order of things had to realise that they were quite impotent. The period to which Belinsky's youth belongs was very hard. Herzen says of that period: "The moral level of society declined. All development was halted, and all that was most advanced and energetic was effaced from life. The rest, frightened, weak, and lost, were petty, and empty; the dregs of the Alexandrian generation now occupied pride of place." We see that the public mood of that time was such that a man inclined towards liberating ideas had to realise his impotence, and "to be conscious of being completely insignificant". One does not need to say how painful such a feeling is. At times Belinsky seemed to be able to overcome it and to put himself in an optimistic frame of mind. Expressing in his "Literary Reveries" the idea that Russia so far has needed enlightenment, not literature, he maintained that our government was inspired with the best of intentions in this direction. Knowing Belinsky as we do, we may be quite certain that he was perfectly sincere in saying so. It is also easy to understand, however, that his faith in the enlightening intentions of the contemporary government could not be constant but had to give way at times to the deepest scepticism: he could not fail to see that each new day brought new facts that showed the complete untenability of this faith. Besides, the achievements of enlightenment could not satisfy a young man full of "abstract heroism". A young man like that needed incomparably more "heroic" perspectives, and these were decidedly lacking in Russian social life. That was why Belinsky's momentary optimism was bound to be replaced again and again by the mood described above, in which he "was painfully conscious of being completely insignificant". This mood had to be got rid of, a way had to be found out of that situation. And Belinsky kept looking for it tirelessly.

For a while he found it, with Bakunin's help, in Fichte's philosophy. "I grasped the Fichtean view," he said later, "with energy, with fanaticism." This is very characteristic and at the same time quite natural. As Belinsky himself put it, in his eyes life was always split into the ideal and the real. In grasping Fichte's philosophy, he felt cured of this duality. He persuaded himself that "the ideal life is the real life ... and the so-called real life is negation, an illusion, nothingness, emptiness".

Taking a firm stand along these lines, Belinsky became all the more hostile to "the so-called real life" in the name of the ideal.

At this period, which we shall call the first period of his philosophical development, the first act of his intellectual drama, he adopted an attitude of complete and unconcealed sympathy for the French Revolution. But the question arises, could his moral quietude be stable if he acquired it through ignoring reality? Clearly it could not.

He declared real life to be an "illusion". But it seems that even illusions are unlike each other. Even the French reality of Belinsky's time differed very strongly from the Russian reality, and as for the past, the Revolution with which he was so much in sympathy now had been at one time a fact of France's "real life". Belinsky only had to ask himself, "Why was it that Russia's history had not known such facts?" to come directly to grips with the more general and the more profound question: Why is it that the "real life" of one country or one time is unlike the real life of another country and another time? This question could not be solved by the "Fichtean" ignoring of "real life". It could only be answered by someone who understood the laws of development of "real life", that is, by someone who would solve the task which, as we already know, nineteenth-century social science diligently attempted to solve.

In a letter belonging already to the next period of his development Belinsky said: "I hate thought as abstraction. But can it be acquired without being abstract?... I understand the absurdity of such an assumption, but my nature is hostile to thinking." It goes without saying that he slandered himself in calling his nature hostile to thinking. This is proved by many of his letters and many of the brilliant pages in which he expounded the theory of literature. But it is also beyond question that Belinsky could not stand arbitrary manipulation with abstract concepts; he always tried to substantiate the trend of his ideas by the objective trend of things. It was this feature of his intellectual make-up (the feature which was, by the way, the reason why he achieved such a great deal in literary criticism) that must have poisoned, very thoroughly and very quickly, the joy which he felt in turning his back on "reality" in the name of the "ideal". Later he called his Fichtean period a period of disintegration. He used this word to denote the state of dissatisfaction which he felt in the nebulous sphere of the "ideal" divorced from "reality". This dissatisfaction led him to break away from Fichte's philosophy.

Owing to lack of data, the history of this break still remains somewhat vague. There can be no doubt, however, that already by the second half of 1837 Belinsky was under Hegel's influence and made peace with that very "reality" to which he had earlier been so "hostile". In a letter of August 7, 1837, advising a friend of his to study philosophy, he adds: "Only in philosophy will you find answers to your soul's questions, only it will give peace

and harmony to your soul and grant you such happiness of which the crowd does not even dream and which the outer life can neither give you nor take away from you." But Fichte's system was also a philosophy. Why then did it not give Belinsky's soul "peace and harmony"? And why did he find them in Hegel's system? This is explained in another passage of the letter, in which Belinsky "most insistently" warns his friend against *enthusiasm for politics*, which, he says, has no meaning at all in Russia. "For Russia a completely different destiny has been prescribed than for France," he says, "where the political trend of the sciences, and the arts, and the character of the inhabitants has its own meaning, its own validity and its good side." This passage partially reveals to us the path which Belinsky traversed—from contempt for "reality" in the name of the "ideal" to a "reconciliation" with this "reality". The point was that, as we already know, the "ideal" excited in Belinsky a warm enthusiasm for some of the pages of France's real history, and this enthusiasm must have compelled him to draw a parallel between the history of France, on the one hand, and that of Russia, on the other. This parallel suggested a conclusion extremely depressing for a thinking Russian, one that could only be disregarded if one completely rejected politics, which allegedly had no meaning at all in Russia. Since this rejection found very strong support in the Hegel of the second phase, the Hegel who wrote the Introduction to the *Philosophie des Rechts*, Belinsky caught at Hegel with all the power of his fervent soul.\*

We have seen that in his "Fichtean period" Belinsky was tormented by the realisation that his abstract ideal found no application to life at all. In his zeal for Hegel he turned his back on the "ideal" which could lead to nothing but fruitless "hostility" towards "reality". "Do not poke your nose into things that do not concern you," he now exclaimed, "but be true to your cause, and your cause is love of truth.... To hell with politics, long live science!"

What questions did the "impetuous Vissarion" expect to be answered by the science for whose sake he abandoned politics? This is clear from the following lines of his letter to Stankevich:

"I came to Moscow from the Caucasus, Bakunin also arrived.... In the summer he looked through Hegel's philosophy of religion and law. A new world opened up to us. Force is right, and right is force.—No, I cannot tell you with what feeling I heard these words—it was liberation. I understood the idea of the fall of king-

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\* The view was recently expressed in our literature that Belinsky's "reconciliation" with "reality" is explained by "the specific features of his personal history". But the main feature of Belinsky's "personal history" was that his theoretical demands could best of all be satisfied at the time by Hegel's philosophy. All the other features of his life served only to support these profound demands.

doms, the legality of the conquerors. I understood that there is no crude material force, no dominion of the bayonet and sword, no arbitrariness, no chance—and my guardianship over human race ended, and the significance of my fatherland appeared to me in a new form....”

The questions which Belinsky expected science to answer were the very same questions which he had formerly expected to be solved by “politics”. There is no “abstraction” in them; they are concrete questions of social development: what explains “the fall of kingdoms”? Are conquests lawful? What is the basis for the dominion of the bayonet and sword? And lastly—the most important and the most profound of these questions: is the history of mankind really the domain of mere chance? Contemporary radical politics and contemporary socialism could only provide abstract answers to these concrete questions: they condemned certain historical events unsympathetic to them (for example, the conquering of one people by another), but they did not explain them. Socialism at that time had not yet graduated from its utopian phase. Hegel’s philosophy, on the contrary, valued only concrete answers to concrete historical questions. And it already partially provided such answers, based on the study of history. In history, force does not always contradict right. There is the famous answer that Sieyès gave to the defenders of the ancien régime who asserted that the rights of the French nobility were based on conquests: “Just that? We in our turn will become conquerors!” And the third estate did indeed “conquer” its new position in society. Anyone not blinded by aristocratic prejudice will agree that the “force” of this estate supported the “right”, far from rejecting it. Thus it appears that the vulgar opposition of right and force is untenable, as it has a meaning only under certain social conditions which are in their turn explained by the course of historical development. This idea expressed by Belinsky in the words “force is right, and right is force” appeared to him as nothing short of a revelation. It has indeed a colossal theoretical significance, and in his eyes it acquired, besides, an immense moral value: it consoled him, holding the promise of imparting sense to utterly ugly Russian reality. That was why he was carried away by it, making it the basis of his famous article on the Battle of Borodino (*Otechestvenniye Zapiski*, 1839, Book XII).

The motif of this article is the struggle against the abstract view of history according to which historical movement is conditioned by the ideas of men. “From the times about which we know only from history,” says Belinsky, “up to our day there is not and never has been a people which was made up and constituted by a mutual conscious agreement of a certain number of men who have expressed the desire to be part of it, or in accordance with an idea of any particular person, however brilliant.” It is inter-

esting that Belinsky takes as his example precisely the question of the origin of monarchy. In his words, the liberal chatterboxes explain its origin by the corruptness of men who, having realised themselves to be incapable of self-government, succumbed to the will of one individual whom they endowed with power. This explanation, however, seems to him absurd. He says: "Everything that has no cause within itself and comes from some alien 'outside', and not from 'inside' itself, all this lacks rationality and, consequently, sacredness. Fundamental state decrees are sacred because they are the basic ideas not of a particular people, but of each people, and also because, after turning into phenomena, becoming fact, they developed dialectically in historical movement, so that their very changes are elements of their own idea. And for this reason fundamental decrees are not law invented by man, but appear, so to say, 'before time' and are merely articulated and recognised by man."

Despite a certain awkwardness in the use of philosophical terms, this passage deserves the greatest attention. Belinsky was looking for a criterion of rationality of social phenomena. Wherein did he find it? In inner necessity: only that phenomenon which has "a cause in itself" is rational. Conversely, all phenomena that emerge due to something "external" that is alien to them, are not rational, that is, phenomena that are not produced by the inner logic of previous social development. Only those social institutions which "dialectically develop in their historical movement" are "rational", and therefore "sacred". It may be argued against this that the "outside" alien to the given phenomenon has a sufficient reason of its own and must therefore be recognised as a link in *another* necessary process. The so-called *accidents* which Belinsky obviously hints at here occur at the point of intersection of two or more necessary processes. Let us take an example. The appearance of Spaniards in Peru should be recognised as accidental from the point of view of the logic of the inner development of the state of the Incas; but it was caused by the Europeans' drive to discover new lands, and that drive was by no means accidental from the point of view of the inner development of European society. This argument, however, only complements Belinsky's idea and does not undermine it in the least. In expressing this idea, he showed himself to be able to deal with the most important and most difficult tasks of sociology. Since this idea was expressed by him, social science has not made a single step forward that does not confirm its correctness.

To continue. It is of course not true that the fundamental social "decrees" appear, so to say, "before time". This could only be asserted by an adherent of absolute idealism, according to which the logical forms of life precede life itself. But that is a dif-



ferent question, one which is not subject to consideration here. As for Belinsky, here again he expressed a thesis that is entirely true in the *sociological sense*. Translated into modern language it means that social institutions appear not because someone wanted to establish precisely these and no other institutions, but because they meet certain social needs that have appeared in the process of historical development and have determined the volitional movement that compels the "social man" to establish such institutions. To assimilate this truth means *to part with utopianism* forever.

It is usually said that at the time of his "reconciliation with reality" Belinsky sacrificed the individual to "the general". We shall soon see that he was ready to make this reproach to himself. But this reproach is based on a misunderstanding.

"Man is particular and accidental in his personality," Belinsky says in the same article, "and necessary in spirit, which is expressed by his personality. Hence the duality of his position and his strivings: his struggle between his 'self' and that which is outside his 'self', which is his 'non-self'.... In order to be a real person, and not an illusion, he should be a *particular expression of the general* or a *finite manifestation of the infinite*. In consequence of this he should renounce his subjective individuality, recognising it as falsehood and an illusion, and should acquiesce in that which is universal, general, recognising that alone as truth and reality. But since this *universal* or *general* is to be found not in him, but in the objective world, he should become linked, merged with it, in order later, having assimilated the objective world into his own subjective possession, to become again a subjective individual, but now a real one, expressing not chance particularity, but the general, the universal—in a word, to become spirit incarnate."

Belinsky "sacrifices" *only* the individual whose "particular" and "chance" strivings *contradict* "the universal or the general". But it would be a mistake to think that, in his view, such a contradiction is inevitable. An individual may be a particular expression of the general, i.e., he may express in his strivings the great goals of his time. Belinsky calls such an individual "a real person" or "the spirit incarnate". And he never had the slightest wish to "sacrifice" such an individual. On the contrary, his warmest sympathies were on his side.

It is true, however, that "the real person" or "the spirit incarnate" had to "acquiesce", in Belinsky's view at the time, in the reality surrounding him, recognising it as the necessary expression of "the universal or the general". In his article "Menzel, Goethe's Critic", he writes: "Reason does not create reality, but becomes conscious of it, having beforehand taken it as an axiom that all that is necessary, legal and rational. It does not say

that a certain people is good while all the others that are unlike it are bad, that a certain epoch in the history of a people or of man is good while another one is bad; all peoples and all epochs are equally great and important for it as expressions of an absolute idea which develops dialectically in them. For it, the rise and fall of kingdoms and peoples is not accidental but intrinsically necessary, and even the epoch of Roman corruption is not an object of condemnation but an object of investigation." Two major errors with regard to Hegel's *dialectics* are immediately apparent here. First, by no means all that is necessary, i.e., real. We know already that according to Hegel the "real" is higher than the merely existing. Second, in making "Roman corruption" the subject of his investigation, a true disciple of Hegel by no means had to "acquiesce" in it. On the contrary, he had to condemn it precisely because it is the product of disintegration of the old, *dying* reality. These two errors are extremely characteristic of Belinsky's mood and mode of thinking at the time. However, after what has been said above on the dual nature of Hegelian philosophy one need hardly repeat that Belinsky made these two errors not because of a lack of understanding of Hegel, but because of a too consistent assimilation of that aspect of his philosophy which was expressed in the Introduction to the *Philosophie des Rechts*.

Having "acquiesced" in reality, Belinsky for a while stands on firm ground and experiences the long forgotten sense of moral quietude. He says that reality has led him into reality and that now everyone is pleased with him and he is pleased with everyone. We know that he even obtained a position at a land surveying institute and enjoyed the practical activity that opened up before him. But this bright mood did not last long. In October 1839, that is, *already before the publication of the article about the Battle of Borodino*, Belinsky suffered, as he himself confessed, from acute moral discomfort. "For me no one existed," says he, "because I myself was dead." This new "disintegration" was probably caused, partly, by the fact that it was difficult for him to give up the old ideal, which was "abstract" yet freedom-loving. Panayev and Herzen have described in their memoirs the exciting and tremendously dramatic conversations between Belinsky and his friends after his "reconciliation with reality". A not very happy private life also played a part in this state of depression. However, all of this Belinsky could have borne easily enough, had Hegel's philosophy, as he assimilated it at the time, been able to solve the problems which tormented him. The biggest trouble was that it could not solve them. In a letter to Botkin that was finished early in February 1840, Belinsky exclaims: "It is ridiculous and annoying; the love of Romeo and Juliet is something general, yet the reader's love or need for love is something particular and

illusory. Life is in books, and in life there is nothing...." "In life there is nothing"—why? When did Hegel say so? Never! But, if the task of the thinking man is the cognition and contemplation of "reality", there is nothing left for him but "the life in books". Hegel's "absolute" conclusions could not satisfy Belinsky, and his dissatisfaction with them brought him back to the "disintegration" which he had hoped to get rid of by "acquiescing" in reality.

Belinsky hoped that philosophy would show him the way to human happiness. And Hegel's philosophy (we repeat and beg this to be remembered: as it was then assimilated by Belinsky) asserted that the "absolute" goal of historical movement had been achieved and that therefore all further discussion of human happiness was idle talk. In a reckless moment Belinsky might acquiesce in this assertion, too; but it was too much against his nature for him to let it go long without protest. His correspondence makes it clear that it was precisely from this side that he approached the parting with the "philosophical cap of Yegor Fyodorovich". In a letter to Botkin of June 13, 1840 he says that he had "made it up completely with the French", whom he had praised to the skies, as we know, in his Fichtean period and against whom he had thundered during the honeymoon of his enthusiasm for Hegel. "Their significance in world history is great," says he. "They do not comprehend the absolute and the concrete, but they live and act in this sphere." Side by side with this reconciliation with the French there arises in him an aversion for the *Russian* reality, quite recently so dear to Belinsky's heart. In the same letter we read: "My love for the native, the Russian, has become sadder: it is no longer a boundless enthusiasm but a feeling of suffering. Everything substantial in our people is great, immense, but the definition is vile, dirty, scoundrelly." How can one "acquiesce" in this kind of reality? So Belinsky does not acquiesce in it any more. In a letter of October 4, 1840\* he exclaims: "Damn my vile desire for a reconciliation with the vile reality! Long live the great Schiller, mankind's noble advocate, the bright star of salvation, the emancipator of society from the bloody prejudices of tradition! Long live reason, and let darkness perish! as the great Pushkin exclaimed. The *human individual* now is in my view higher than history, society, and mankind. That is the thought and the idea of the century! My God, I shudder to think of my former mood—it must have been fever or lunacy, I am like a convalescent now."

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\* To Botkin again. We warn the reader that all the letters which are quoted here without naming the addressee were written by Belinsky to Botkin who was one of his Moscow friends.

## IV

Belinsky's letters during this period of his new and last break with reality produce such a strong impression by their passionate and sympathetic tone that, under its influence, readers frequently lose sight of the theoretical aspects of the matter. Thus, many of them are still convinced that, having thrown away "the philosophical cap of Yegor Fyodorovich", Belinsky parted with Hegel's philosophy entirely. But that is not so at all.

Already after his rebellion against the "cap" Belinsky, while condemning his articles on the Borodino and Menzel, continued to regard the period of his enthusiasm for Hegel as the beginning of his spiritual life. He calls this time "the best or at any rate the most remarkable time" of his life. Moreover, he does not condemn his article about the Battle of Borodino unconditionally. He says: "The idea which I attempted to develop in the article on Glinka's book *Essays on the Battle of Borodino* is basically correct." But he now admits that he failed to make proper use of this basically correct idea: "I should also have developed the idea of negation as an historical right, the first, sacred one without which mankind would have turned into a stagnant and stinking morass." To develop the idea of negation was to discover in what way the given reality through its own development is led to the negation of itself. However brilliant Belinsky was, he could not discover it for the simple reason that he did not have the necessary data for that: they were not yet available in Russian reality that was too undeveloped at that time. In the West, too, the best of the progressive minds (as represented by the so-called Left wing of the Hegelian school and, later, even more by Marx and Engels) were only beginning to outline the path which was to lead to an understanding of the process of the inner development of the modern society. That was why Belinsky, having rebelled against the "cap", began to "develop the idea of negation" not through a dialectical analysis of reality, but through an appeal to the abstract concept of the *human individual*. "It is time," he wrote, this time in one of his letters, of course, since the censors would never have allowed this to be said in the articles, "that the human individual, who is wretched enough as it is, was liberated from the vile fetters of irrational reality, the opinion of the mob and the tradition of barbaric times." As was usual with him, he was entirely carried away by the new thought that possessed him. "The human individual," he writes, "has become a point on which I fear that I will go out of my mind. I am starting to love mankind like a Marat: to make the smallest part of it happy, I think I would destroy the rest by fire and sword." Under the influence of this love for mankind which, of course, had never left him but only took a new form now, the "impetuous Vissarion"

soon became a socialist. In a letter of September 8, 1841, we read: "I have now reached a new extreme, the idea of *socialism*, which has become for me the idea above all ideas ... the alpha and omega of faith and knowledge.... (For me) it has absorbed history, religion, and philosophy. And therefore I now explain in terms of it my own life, your life and the lives of all whom I have met on life's path...."

One would have thought that this new idea, at any rate, might bring Belinsky the moral quietude which he craved for so long. Alas! In the same letter we hear these gloomy tones: "There is no activity without a goal, no goal without interests, and no life without activity. The source of interests, goals and activity is the substance of social life.... We are people without a homeland—no, even worse than without a homeland; we are people whose homeland is an illusion, and is it surprising that we ourselves are illusions?"

Where did these gloomy notes come from? Belinsky was not satisfied with the *abstract idea* of socialism. It is not for nothing that he disliked abstractness and had received an excellent schooling in Hegelian logic. He could not forget that "the substance of social life" serves as the source of interests, goals and activity. What does he mean by "the substance of social life"? Nothing else but the *totality of social relations*. And when he says that this "substance" gives rise to man's aspirations and activity, that means that he regards as serious and fruitful *only such* aspirations and *only such* activity which are rooted in the objective course of social development. The "substance" of Russian life was hostile to progressive aspirations and progressive activity. The Russian adherents of progress therefore become "illusions".

We know the word "illusion" very well already. We heard it from Belinsky at the time of his enthusiasm for Fichte. He used this word then to denote reality. In the second period of his development, that is, when he "acquiesced" in reality, he declared the ideal that contradicts this reality to be an illusion. In the third act of his intellectual drama he again rebelled against reality, but men who negate reality in the name of the ideal still seem to him to be illusions. The only difference is that earlier, being under the influence of the famous "cap", he *hated* these "illusions", whereas now, having thrown away the cap, he sympathises with them with all his heart and considers himself to be one of them. It thus turns out that the rebellion against reality did not quite "reconcile" him with the ideal. What is the matter here?

Belinsky recognises the moral justice of the ideal but is unable to connect it with the "substance" of Russian reality. His ideal therefore again proves abstract and consequently impotent. "Reality awakened us and opened our eyes," Belinsky says in the same letter, "but to what purpose?... Better if it had closed

them forever, and quenched the anxious desires of the heart avid for life with the sleep of insignificance...."

Seeing no objective element in contemporary Russia that would be capable in its development of leading to the negation of "vile reality", Belinsky began to feel a certain animosity even for the people, with whom, of course, he sympathised with all his heart. In a letter to Botkin, on the occasion of the death of Koltsov, who had suffered a great deal from the despotism of his father, Belinsky asks: "And is the father to blame for the fact that he is a moujik? And has he done something extraordinary?... I cannot pray for wolves or bears or mad dogs or Russian merchants and moujiks or for Russian judges and policemen, but neither can I feel personal hatred for any of them."\*

We again see Belinsky in the state of "disintegration" which did not cease to torment him almost from the very beginning of his conscious life. Trying to cure himself of this disease, he consoles himself with the hope of powerful development of the "Russian personality" in the future. "The Russian personality is still an embryo," he wrote to Botkin in March 1847, "but how much breadth and power there are in the nature of this embryo, how oppressive and terrible for it are all one-sidedness and narrow-mindedness.... Do not think that I am an enthusiast in this question. No, I arrived at its solution (for myself) along the painful path of doubt and negation." This solution was also for him a certain guarantee for the future of the whole Russian people. In his article "A Look at Russian Literature in 1846" he says: "We do not assert it as indisputable that the Russian people is destined to express in its nationality the most rich and many-sided content and that therein lies the reason for its remarkable ability to apprehend and assimilate all that is alien to it; but we venture to think that such an idea as an assumption expressed without self-advertisement and fanaticism is not entirely without foundation...."

## V

That was the same path of gratifying surmises and prophecies along which the Slavophiles and the Narodniks had travelled so far. Kavelin says that he was once present at a conversation in

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\* Such escapades against the "moujiks" gave rise to the appearance in our literature of the view that in the forties Belinsky belonged to an anti-democratic trend in the Westerners' circle (or at any rate a trend indifferent to the grievous position of the people), whereas Granovsky and Herzen represented the "friends of the people" trend in this circle. (See the article by Mr. Ch. Vetrinsky, "T. N. Granovsky.—The Westerners and the Slavophiles in 1844-45".) We, on the contrary, are very much inclined to believe that, being an extremist in all his attitudes, Belinsky felt a more profound sympathy for the oppressed people than the other members of the Westerners' circle.

which Belinsky expressed the Slavophil idea that Russia would be able to solve the historical antagonism between labour and capital better than the West. Utopian socialism to which Belinsky became inclined on parting with the Hegelian "cap" provided ample nourishment for such dreams. Belinsky, however, by the very nature of his dialectical mind was insured against an engulfing and prolonged enthusiasm for them. In the article "A Look at Russian Literature in 1846" quoted above, defending Peter the Great's reforms against Slavophil attacks, he remarks: "Such events in the life of a people are too great to be chance events, and the life of a people is not a frail craft which any man can direct as he likes with a light movement of the oar. Instead of thinking about the impossible and making a laughing stock of oneself by arrogant intervention in historical destinies, it is far better to recognise the irresistible and immutable reality of that which exists and act on its basis, guided by reason and common sense, and not by fantasies of the Manilov type." In another passage, while seeing clearly the negative aspects of Petrine reforms, he makes this reservation: "But we must not stop at recognising the rightness of this or that fact, but must study its causes, in the hope of finding in the evil itself the means for escaping from it." He insists that the means for fighting the unfavourable consequences of Petrine reforms should be sought in the reforms themselves, that is, in the new elements that they introduced into Russian life. That is the correct view of the question, and in expressing it Belinsky again rises to the same theoretical height which he reached in tackling the problem, in the article on the Battle of Borodino, of explaining reality by the course of the historical movement that had created it. And, while he remained at that level, he saw quite clearly the untenability of the "abstract ideal" and the defects of the abstract method of thinking. He said: "The unconditional or absolute method of reasoning is the easiest, but also the most unreliable; it is now called the abstract method." The error of the Slavophiles, whom he was fighting savagely at the time, was in his eyes a *methodological error* first and foremost: "They run arbitrarily ahead of time, take the process of development for its result, want to see the fruit before the blossom and, finding the leaves tasteless, declare the fruit to be rotten and suggest transplanting huge forest, stretching over a vast expanse, to another place and cultivating it in a different way. In their opinion, this is not easy, but it is possible." This strikingly apt critical remark enables us to form a conception of Belinsky's probable attitude to the Narodniks, who faithfully repeated the Slavophiles' methodological mistake.

It is beyond question in any case that at the end of his life he had a completely negative attitude towards utopian socialists, of whom he said at the time that they had been born of the fanta-

sies of Rousseau's genius. Louis Blanc, whom he had valued very highly at one time, he now compares with Shevryyov.\* It should be noted that Louis Blanc's view of Voltaire was, in Belinsky's opinion, true in itself, but completely distorted by the fact that it lacked an historical perspective. Belinsky now most energetically concentrates on elaborating an historical perspective which would enable him to provide a firm foundation for his hopes for the future. This is clearly seen from his letter to Annenkov of February 15, 1848. This letter is so important for the history of his intellectual development that we believe it necessary to quote a rather lengthy passage from it:

"I have just been reading Rousseau's *Confession*," says Belinsky, "and, judging by it, as well as because of the religious adoration of the asses, I now feel the strongest loathing for this gentleman.... But what a noble individual Voltaire is! What warm sympathy for everything that is human, reasonable, for the plight of the simple people! What a great deal he has done for humanity! True, he sometimes calls the people the vile populace, but that is because the people is ignorant, superstitious, savagely cruel, bloodthirsty, and likes torture and executions. By the way, my religious friend and our Slavophiles helped me a lot to discard my mystic belief in the people. Where and when have the people ever liberated themselves? Everything is always done through individuals. When I called you a conservative in my arguments with you about the bourgeoisie, I was an ass squared, and you were the intelligent one. France's entire future is in the hands of the bourgeoisie, all progress depends on it alone, and the people can only play a passive, auxiliary role at times. When I said in the presence of my religious friend that Russia needs a Peter the Great now, he attacked this idea like a heresy, saying that the people must do everything for itself. What a naive, Arcadian thought!... Why not assume that the wolves living in the Russian forests will unite in a well-organised state, establish first an absolute monarchy, then a constitutional one, and finally become a republic? Pius IX took only two years to show what a great man can mean to his country. My religious friend also argued with me that Russia would be far better off without a bourgeoisie. But it is now obvious that Russia's inner process of civil development will begin only when the Russian nobility turns into a bourgeoisie. Poland is the best proof of just how strong a state that does not have a bourgeoisie invested with rights is."

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\* For his unjustly negative attitude towards Voltaire. With regard to this attitude Belinsky in his letter to Annenkov of February 15, 1848 expresses himself with considerable energy: "I am now reading Voltaire's novels and spitting every minute in the face of that imbecile, that ass, that beast, Louis Blanc."



It would appear that Belinsky continues to uphold the abstract viewpoint of the human individual. This is apparently confirmed by the words, "everything is always done through individuals", and his conviction that Russia needed a Peter the Great. But what was he needed for, exactly? Only to give a new impetus to *Russia's economic development*. And that is the most important feature of Belinsky's new theory. *The future development of Russia is now believed to be dependent on her economic development*: Russia's civil development requires the transformation of the nobility into the bourgeoisie. We can see now that the economic consequences of the reforms conducted by the historical Peter were sufficient for the development of Russia along the capitalist path. But we do not think the less of Belinsky's shrewdness for that; we have to admit that he determined quite correctly where the solution of the future destiny of Russia as a cultured country might be found.\*

Neither was it correct that the people, that is, properly speaking, the proletariat, is forever destined to remain a passive instrument of the bourgeoisie. This view of Belinsky's was not true with regard to Western Europe, and it was not true with regard to Russia either. The inevitability of the development of capitalism in this country did not doom the working class to passivity; far from it: for the first time it provided an opportunity—and a considerable opportunity at that—for its independent historical activity. Here again, however, Belinsky's error is not so great as might seem at first glance. It should also be regarded in an historical perspective. Indeed, the utopian socialists, whom Belinsky now compares with the Slavophiles, also ascribed an entirely passive role to the "people" in their theoretical constructions: their hopes were also for the upper classes only. Scientific socialism alone determined correctly the part to be played by the "people" in the progressive development of modern society. Belinsky did not live to see the day when scientific socialism finally took shape as a consistent theory. But soon after he took up a literary career his brilliant intellect presented him with theoretical tasks the correct solution of which led straight to scientific socialism. That was precisely why he could not have any lasting peace with the "abstract ideal". He said: "All our leaders are Moses, not Joshuas." He himself might be called a Moses attempting to lead himself and his ideological associates out of the wilderness of the "abstract ideal".

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\* In his *Diary* entry for May 17, 1844 Herzen wrote that Belinsky looked at the Slav world in desperation without understanding it. We now have to say that Belinsky, far more correctly than Herzen, determined the sociological conditions necessary for the further development of Russia in particular and the Slavs in general.

## VI

Proceeding to Belinsky's literary views, let us note first of all that German philosophy influenced them just as decisively as it did his social views. Those historians of our literature who found that Belinsky's enthusiasm for Hegel had a harmful effect on the development of his aesthetic concepts were very much mistaken. In actual fact the strongest points of all these concepts were entirely rooted in German philosophy, in particular in Hegel's philosophical system.

The influence of German philosophy on the development of our literary criticism began to be felt even before Belinsky's appearance on the scene. Thus, his immediate predecessor in the field of criticism, Nadezhdin, is rightly considered to be the champion of Schelling's aesthetic views in our literature. Even before Nadezhdin there were writers in this country who realised that it was precisely in German philosophy that one had to look for guidance in elaborating a correct view of the state and tasks of Russian literature. D. Venevitinov, who died in March 1827, said in his note "Some Thoughts for the Plan of the Journal": "Thus, philosophy and its application to all the epochs in the arts and sciences—these are the subjects meriting our particular attention, the subjects that are all the more necessary for Russia because she still needs a firm basis for the fine arts and can only find this basis, this guarantee of her originality and, consequently, of her moral freedom in literature, in philosophy alone, which will compel her to develop her powers and form a system of thinking." The same note explains why thinking people of that time were attracted to German philosophy. Venevitinov faced two questions: "What forces move her [Russia.—*G. P.*] towards the goal of enlightenment? What level has she reached compared with the other peoples in this field that is common to all?" Russian literature did not answer these questions and, in Venevitinov's words, "the happy-go-lucky crowd of our men of letters" had no inkling even of their importance. German philosophy did not, of course, treat these questions either, as they were specifically Russian questions, but it provided a method that promised to lead to their solution. Adhering to the point of view of development, it regarded the literature of every given people as the expression of its "spirit", which in its turn constituted a stage in the development of the absolute. Therefore, to elaborate a correct view of the literature of a given people meant to arrive at an understanding of its "spirit", that is, its historical role. One may see that the literary views of the men who had assimilated German philosophy were bound to be very closely linked with their historico-philosophical, and therefore publicistic, views. It is therefore not surprising that Belinsky, who, as we have seen, possessed the intuition of a so-

ciologist of genius, proved to be at the same time the most profound thinker among our critics.

The influence of German philosophy is noticeable already in his first article "Literary Reveries", written long before he became enthusiastic about Hegel. "Every people," he says there, "owing to an immutable law of providence, must express through its life a certain side of the life of all mankind; if that is not the case, the given people does not live but merely vegetates, and its existence does not serve anything." Correspondingly, the literature of each given people (if it really deserves the name of literature) constitutes, in Belinsky's opinion, "a collection of literary works that are the fruit of free inspiration and concerted (without prearrangement, though) efforts of men who were created for art, men whose life is in it and who perish outside it, men who completely express and reproduce in their elegant creations the spirit of the people that gave them birth and brought them up, men who live the life of that people and breathe its spirit, expressing in their creative works its inner life unto the innermost depths and throbs." Russian literature is not yet an expression of the inner life of the Russian people. There have been a certain number of talented writers and a certain number of works of art in it. The exceptions, however brilliant they may be, only serve to confirm the general rule. Our literature was an imitation of Western literatures. That is why Belinsky says, and "repeats it with delight, with enjoyment", that we have no literature. He regards it as his moral duty to insist on this. "Noble poverty," he exclaims, "is better than dreamy wealth! There will come a time when enlightenment will flood the whole of Russia, the intellectual make-up of the people will assume a clearer form, and our artists and writers will then stamp the imprint of the Russian spirit on all their works. But what we need now is study! study! and more study!"

When will we have a literature? It will emerge when we have a society in which the make-up of the "mighty Russian people" is expressed. This is not merely a literary programme, it is also a programme for the desirable social development. It is therefore clear that Belinsky consciously links the solution of the question of our literature with the question of the course of our social development since Peter the Great's times. Thus, in his first article already Belinsky attempts to find a historico-philosophical or, as we would say now, a sociological basis for his literary judgments.

If literature serves as an expression of the life of the people, then the first demand that may be made upon it by the critics is that of truthfulness. It is clear from this how favourable was the influence of German philosophy on the development of our criticism. German philosophy prepared the critics for correct evaluation of the realism that blossomed so richly in our literature with

the appearance of Gogol. The delight with which Belinsky greeted Gogol is well known. In his remarkable article "On the Russian Novel and the Novels of Gogol" that appeared in 1835 in the *Teleskop*, Belinsky thus characterises the merits of these novels: "*The absolute truthfulness to life* (in Gogol's novels) is closely linked with a simplicity of fantasy. He does not flatter life, neither does he slander it; he joyously shows off everything that is human and beautiful in it, but at the same time he does not in the least conceal its ugliness. In both cases he is true to life to the utmost degree. He gives a true portrait of life, a remarkable likeness of it, from the original's expression to the freckles on the face." But life is extremely varied in its manifestations, and one cannot demand that all artists should take an identical attitude towards it: one artist approaches life from one side, another, from a different one. "If Hahn the Icelander," says Belinsky, "is possible in nature, I really do not understand why is he worse than a Karl Moor or even a Marquis Posa. I love Karl Moor as a man, I adore Posa as a hero, I hate Hahn the Icelander as a monster; but all of them are equally beautiful to me as creations of fantasy, as particular phenomena of life in general." In these lines, taken again from the "Literary Reveries", it is useful to note Belinsky's attitude towards Schiller; he "loves" his Karl Moor and "adores" Marquis Posa. Did he then regard *The Robbers* and *Don Carlos* as true depictions of life? Not quite. But he counted them, as well as "almost all Schiller's dramas", among works "whose subject is real life, but in which this life is re-created, as it were, or transformed, either as the result of some cherished idea or of a one-sided, if powerful, talent or, lastly, from an overflow of passion which prevents the author from taking a more profound and fundamental view of life and from comprehending it such as it is, in all its entirety". A few lines later Belinsky remarks that, although Karl Moor talks a lot, there is not a trace of verbiage in his words: "The point is that here it is not the character that is speaking but the author, and that in the whole of this work there is no truth of life, yet there is truth of feeling; there is no reality, no drama, but a world of poetry; the positions are false, the situations unnatural, but the feeling is true, and the thought profound." This passage is very important. Belinsky's view of the *aesthetic merits of Schiller's dramas* expressed in it remained unaltered to the end of the critic's life. If his attitude to Schiller *himself*, nevertheless, did change radically, that is explained by changes in Belinsky's publicistic, not aesthetic, views. We shall see presently how this change affected his critical activity, and we shall now remind the reader that in the articles we quote here we are still dealing with the Belinsky who, far from being reconciled with the reality around him, disdained it and approached in this negative attitude that period of his life when, carried away by

Fichte's philosophy, he declared the ideal to be reality and reality an illusion. Extremely characteristic in this respect is the conclusion of his article "Nothing About Nothing or the Report of the *Teleskop*'s Publisher on the Last Six Months (of 1835) of Russian Literature". We read there: "Literature is a people's self-consciousness, and where such self-consciousness is lacking, literature is either a rare-ripe fruit or a means of subsistence, the trade of a certain class of persons. If there are beautiful refined works in this kind of literature, they are exceptional and not positive phenomena, and there is no rule for exceptions...."

From the point of view of a man ascribing great importance to the ideal, reality which has not yet in its development led the people to self-consciousness cannot appear to be worthy of respect. For such a man it is natural, given certain intellectual habits, to declare *such* reality an illusion. But declaring unpleasant reality to be an illusion does not mean putting an end to it. Where is the path that leads the people towards self-consciousness? We know that at that period Belinsky believed enlightenment to be such a path. We know also that in the article "Literary Reveries" he expressed the conviction that the Russian government was very preoccupied with enlightenment. But he certainly could not think that the servants of the ideal had the right to rest content with their faith in the government's intentions for enlightenment. No, these men must, in their turn, work for the good of enlightenment. Literary critics in particular can do quite a lot in this case. In Belinsky's opinion at the time, literary criticism in this country was to pursue primarily the goal of enlightenment. "This country," he wrote in the article "On Criticism and the Literary Opinions of the *Moskovsky Nablyudatel*" (1836), "will benefit from the highest, the transcendental form of criticism: it is necessary; but in this country it must be verbose, talkative, repeating itself, interpretative. Its goal must be not so much the success of science as the success of education. Our criticism must be the society's governess, it must express noble truths in simple language. In its principles it must be German, and in its mode of exposition, French. German theory and the French mode of exposition are the only means of making it both profound and easily comprehensible to everybody."

Just like the French Enlighteners of the eighteenth century, Belinsky adhered to the view that "opinion rules the world". An enthusiasm for Fichte's subjective idealism would have been particularly favourable for vivid literary expression of the subjective view of history. The external circumstances were such, however, that exactly at the time of this enthusiasm Belinsky had to interrupt his literary activity. In October 1836 the *Teleskop*, which in that year appeared jointly with the *Molva*, was suppressed for the publication of Chaadayev's famous first "Phi-

losophical Letter", and Belinsky had a wonderful opportunity of testing the grounds for his hopes concerning the government's intentions for enlightenment. It was then perhaps that he felt most strongly that he and his like who served the ideal were "completely insignificant". The difficulty of his position was aggravated by the fact that the closing of the *Teleskop* deprived him of almost all means of subsistence. His poverty at the time, however, did not stop the intense work of his intellect. As we have already said, his enthusiasm for Hegel began in 1837, and when in the spring of 1838 he again worked as a literary critic on the staff of the *Moskovsky Nablyudatel*, which was taken over by his friends—if only for a very short time—he spoke already as a man who had turned a disdainful back on the abstract ideal and had reconciled himself with reality.

In a critical article written on the occasion of the second edition of Fonvisin's works and the fifth edition of the works of Zagoskin, Belinsky, following Rötcher, defines the goals of philosophical criticism of works of art. "A work of art," he says there, "is an organic expression of a concrete idea in concrete form. A concrete idea is a true and absolute idea, complete, covering all of its sides, fully equal to itself and fully expressing itself—and it is only a concrete idea that may be embodied in concrete artistic form. The idea in a work of art must be concretely merged with the form, that is, make up a unity with it, lose itself, disappear in it, permeate the whole of it." Correspondingly, philosophical criticism of a work of art must first of all determine the idea embodied in it. Then it must make certain that the idea that inspired the artist permeates all the parts of the work being analysed. In a genuinely artistic work there is nothing superfluous; all of its parts form a single indivisible whole, and even those of them which are apparently irrelevant with regard to the basic idea serve to express it more fully. As an illustration, Belinsky quotes *Othello*, where "only the main character expresses the idea of jealousy, whereas all the others are preoccupied with quite different interests and passions; despite this, however, the main idea of the drama is the *idea of jealousy*, and *all* the characters in the drama, each of them having a significance of its own, serve to express the main idea".

A complete understanding of a work of art is possible only through philosophical criticism, whose duty is to find manifestations of the general and the infinite in the particular and the finite. But historical criticism must also be able to determine the historical significance of a given work of art. There are many works of art which do not have a great artistic value but are very important as material for the history of art. Belinsky considers many phenomena of Russian literature from the historical standpoint. Kantemir, Sumarokov, Kheraskov, Bogdanovich, Fonvisin, Kap-

nist and others are important, in Belinsky's eyes, as "elements in the development of public opinion" in Russia.

French criticism also has its relative merit from this viewpoint. Belinsky reproaches it for ignoring the laws of fine art and for neglecting the artistic merits of a work of art while concentrating on the discovery of the "civic and political element" in it. Belinsky is also dissatisfied with the fact that French criticism is too preoccupied with the writer's personality and the external circumstances of his life. In his words, to understand the tragedies of Aeschylus or Sophocles we do not need to know at all what happened during the lifetime of these authors in Greece. French criticism does not explain anything in works of art; but it has its value in the case of works not of artistic but of historical significance: such are the works of Voltaire, for example.

## VII

These remarks of Belinsky's about French criticism contain much that is true, but even more that is erroneous. His reproach against French criticism is applicable, for instance, to Sainte-Beuve, who in his literary descriptions did indeed all too often lay excessive emphasis on the details of writers' lives without paying proper attention to the general character of the historical milieu in which they lived and acted. But Belinsky was entirely wrong in saying that to understand the Greek tragedy one did not need to know the history of Greece, an understanding of the role of the Greek people in the absolute life of mankind being all that was needed. This mistake of his revealed the weak side of German idealism, which explained the historical movement of mankind by the laws of the development of the "idea" and regarded history as applied logic. However, absolute idealism as represented by Hegel did not always ignore the concrete causes of the internal development of human societies. At this period of his life Belinsky was much more guilty than Hegel of abusing a priori logical constructions and neglecting facts. And that is quite understandable. We know already that he was then carried away not by Hegel the dialectician, but by Hegel the herald of absolute truth. At that time he regarded literature from the point of view of this truth. "The task of genuine criticism," he says in his analysis of N. Polevoi's *Essays on Russian Literature*, "is to discover in the poet's creations the general, not the particular, the human, not the personal; the eternal, not the temporal; the necessary, not the accidental, and determine on the basis of the general, that is, of the idea, the value, the virtue, the place and the significance of the poet." But if criticism cares nothing for the temporal that means it may ignore history in general. Here again Belinsky goes much farther than Hegel his teacher. He wrote of Voltaire:

"Voltaire in his Satanic might, under the colours of the finite intellect, rebelled against eternal reason, raging against his impotence in an attempt to comprehend by his intellect that which is only comprehensible by reason, which is at the same time love, and beatitude, and revelation." It will not be inappropriate to compare with this the following reference made by Hegel to the French emancipation movement of the eighteenth century, a movement in which Voltaire played, as we know, a most outstanding role: "That was a magnificent sunrise," said Hegel. "All thinking beings greeted joyously the coming of the new epoch. A festive mood reigned throughout that time, and the entire world was permeated by the enthusiasm of the spirit, as if its reconciliation with the deity had taken place for the first time." This is quite different from what Belinsky says. But this was written by Hegel the dialectician, not by Hegel the herald of absolute truth. Hegel the herald of absolute truth was by no means inclined "to greet joyously" the coming of revolutionary events. And at the time of his "reconciliation with reality" our critic followed this Hegel, not the other.

We have said already that, having thrown away Hegel's "philosophical cap", Belinsky remained, contrary to the almost universally accepted opinion of this episode in his life, true to Hegelian philosophy. The only difference was that earlier he had been carried away by Hegel's "absolute" conclusions, whereas now he began to apply the latter's dialectical method. This is particularly apparent in the development of his literary views: they changed mainly in the sense that they became permeated with the element of dialectics.

Here is an example. Having become reconciled with reality, Belinsky maintained that literary criticism had to reveal the "general" and the "necessary" that is contained in a work of art. In his article "A Look at Russian Literature in 1847", that is, at the very end of his activity, Belinsky wrote: "The poet must express not the particular and the accidental but the general and the necessary." One cannot fail to see that this is essentially the same view, but the element of dialectics has penetrated it and has produced extremely important changes there. Belinsky does not now oppose the "general" to the "temporal", nor does he identify the "temporal" with the "accidental". Now he assumes that the "general" develops in the course of time, lending temporal phenomena their historical meaning and their essential content. The "temporal" is "necessary" precisely because the development of the "general" is necessary. Only that which has no significance for the course of this development is "accidental". This is Belinsky's view now. Careful perusal of those of his works which were written at the time following his rebellion against the "philosophical cap" shows clearly that it is exactly this change in his basic philosophi-



cal views, that is, the introduction of the dialectical element in them, that conditions the most significant of the changes in his literary views.

Having abandoned the "absolute" standpoint, Belinsky took a different view of the historical development of art. Already in his fine article on Derzhavin in 1843 he wrote: "There are no ideas that remain ideas; every idea is realised as a fact—an object or an action. The realisation of an idea in a fact is subject to certain immutable laws, the most important of which is that of *sequence* and *gradualness*. Nothing emerges suddenly, nothing is born ready made, everything that has an idea for a starting-point develops moment by moment, moving dialectically from a lower stage to a higher one. We observe this immutable law in nature, in man, in mankind. Nature did not appear all of a sudden, ready made, it had its days or moments of creation.... The same law is true of art as well." Since the content of art is the same eternal idea which determines, through its dialectical development, the whole historical movement of mankind, it is clear that the development of art is closely linked with the whole development of social life. A great poet is great only because he is the organ and the mouthpiece of his time and of his society. "To solve the riddle of the gloomy poetry of such a colossal poet as Byron," says Belinsky, "one must first solve the mystery of the epoch expressed by him, and to do that one must throw the light of the torch of philosophy onto the historical labyrinth of events which mankind traversed on the way to its great destination—to be the embodiment of eternal reason, and one must determine philosophically the latitude and longitude of the point at which the poet found mankind on the path of its historical movement. Without this, all references to events, any analysis of morals and manners, of the relations of society to the poet and of the poet to society and to his own self will explain nothing at all."

Moreover, Belinsky is now ready to take into account the influence of the geographical environment (in the literal, not figurative, sense of the words), although this aspect is left almost unexplored in his works.

At the time of his enthusiasm for the abstract ideal Belinsky, as we know, "loved" Schiller's heroes. "Acquiescing" in reality, he wrote that Schiller's early works, that is, precisely those whose characters Belinsky had "loved" so much earlier, were decidedly immoral with regard to the absolute truth and higher morality. In these works Schiller "wanted to realise eternal truths and realised his personal and limited convictions, which he later gave up himself. Since he posed a task and a goal outside art in these works, they became nothing but poetic bastards and monsters, phenomena that are quite insignificant in the sphere of art." After his rebellion against Hegel Belinsky calls Schiller mankind's noble advocate,

the bright star of salvation, etc. It would seem impossible to change more radically in one's attitude towards a writer. But it only seems so.

Why does Belinsky extol Schiller again now? Because he is now carried away by the idea of the "individual", which is for him "higher than history, society, and mankind". He does not now forbid the thinking individual's revolt against reality; on the contrary, he is delighted at its protest against "the bloody prejudices of tradition". At the same time there comes a change in his judgments of writers who give poetical expression to the aspirations of the individual fighting against social prejudices. That is the whole secret of his change of attitude towards Schiller. Belinsky no longer calls his dramas immoral, he even praises them very highly, but he praises them from a very special point of view. He calls Schiller's dramas the great creations of the century, adding immediately, however, that they should not be confused with the real drama of the new world. That means that they are bad as dramas and good only as lyrical works. That is why Belinsky remarks: "One must be too great a lyrical poet to be able to walk freely wearing the buskins of Schiller's drama: a mere talent putting on its buskin is bound to fall off it right into the mud. That is why all imitators of Schiller are so cloying, philistine and unbearable."

In other words, Belinsky's view of Schiller's dramas *as such* remained the same, only his attitude towards the *subjective element* inherent in these dramas changed. At the time of his "reconciliation" with reality Belinsky reduced the role of the subject to contemplation of the objective reason of that reality; everything that went beyond the limits of this contemplative role was condemned by him as a blunder of immature subjective "opinion". At the time of his *rebellion* against reality he could not but sympathise with those "individuals" who, like himself, fought against routine. In the third period of his life he sympathised with that which was severely condemned by him in the second period and frequently inspired him in the first. These changes, however, did not affect his literary judgments to any considerable extent, and when they did, the judgments only gained in depth. In saying this, we have in mind particularly the second period of his development. Here, for instance, is a most important passage from his article about the *Essays on the Battle of Borodino*: "We think and firmly believe that the time of 'oohs and ahs' and exclamation marks and rows of dots to express profound thought where none exists has passed in our literature; that the time has passed when great truths were stated with dictatorial pomposity, but without any foundation or support apart from the personal opinion and arbitrary conceptions of a pseudothinker.... The question is not one of *what seems to be* but one of *what is* in actual fact, and

that question cannot be solved by *opinion* but by *thought*. Opinion reposes on the chance conviction of a chance individual who is, in himself, an insignificant thing and of no interest to anyone; thought reposes on itself, on its own internal development in accordance with the laws of logic."

To oppose that which is in actual fact to that which only seems to be means to reject the verdicts passed in the name of abstract concepts and to attempt to base one's judgments on an analysis of objective reality. It goes without saying that Belinsky as a literary critic gained a lot in this attempt, without losing anything.

One of our historians of literature expressed the idea that at the time of his "reconciliation" with reality Belinsky rejected all "subjective lyrical poetry". But all lyrical poetry is subjective. Yet Belinsky never rejected the lyrical poetry of Goethe or Kol-tsov.

## VIII

Let us now attempt to formulate in a few words the aesthetic code of our critic.

The first law of that code is that the poet should show things, not prove them, and think in images, not in syllogisms. This law follows from the definition of poetry as the direct contemplation of truth or thinking in images.

But if the subject of poetry is truth, then truthfulness is the first condition for artistic creative work, and beauty lies in truth and simplicity. The poet must depict life as it is, without embroidering or distorting it. That is the second law of Belinsky's artistic code.

According to the meaning of the third law, the idea at the base of a work of art must be a concrete idea embracing the whole of the subject and not one particular aspect of it.

By the fourth law, the form of a work of art must correspond to its idea and the idea to the form.

Finally, the unity of form must correspond to unity of thought. That means that all the parts of an artistic work must form a harmonious whole. That is the fifth and, unless we are mistaken, the last basic law of Belinsky's aesthetic code.

It is difficult to raise any objections of substance to this code. One cannot but agree that the form of an artistic work must correspond to its idea or that the poet thinks in images, not syllogisms. But this code did not prevent Belinsky from condemning French "classical" tragedy, and that condemnation was undoubtedly a mistake. Already in his article on the works of Derzhavin (1843) he wrote: "The task of true aesthetics is not to decide *what art should be*, but to *define what art is*. In other words: aesthetics should not discuss art as something presupposed, as a kind of ideal which can be realised only in accordance with its theory;

no, it should examine art as a subject which existed long before it and to the existence of which it owes its own existence." This is quite right. But, in thinking out his aesthetic code, Belinsky did not always bear in mind the golden rule expressed in the passage just quoted. His literary judgments sometimes savour of a priority, which is particularly evident in the view of art as an ideal that may be realised only according to a given theory. To understand the origin of this defect one should remember that in elaborating his code Belinsky adhered to the point of view of German *idealist* aesthetics which, just as the whole of German idealist philosophy, suffered from its a priority, despite its enormous merits. When the thinker regards history in general, and therefore the history of art in particular, as applied logic, it is very natural for him to be tempted at times to construct a priori such propositions which could only be justified as inferences from facts. Belinsky, just like Hegel, sometimes yielded to this temptation.

To this it should be added that for reasons which we cannot consider here German writers on aesthetics, right from the time of Lessing, waged a more or less decisive struggle with French Classicism, and that this struggle was the cause of a certain one-sidedness in their view of French Classical literature. This one-sidedness partially infected Belinsky, too, whose literary views were formed under the prevalent influence of German philosophical aesthetics.

But these are mere details. On the whole it should be recognised that, proceeding from his code, Belinsky was able to render Russian literature an enormous service by kicking aside, in A. N. Pypin's words, the old romantic rubbish and paving the way for the consolidation of the Gogol school realism. It should be added to all of this that Belinsky himself did not interpret his aesthetic code in the same way at all times.

Here is an example. The idea of a work of art must embrace the subject from all sides. What does that mean? In his "reconciliatory" period Belinsky meant by this that a poetic work must depict the "rational nature" of the reality in which the poet lives. But if a work of art suggests that reality is not quite rational, that shows that only one side of the subject is depicted in it. This interpretation of the aesthetic law indicated here is narrow and incorrect. The idea of jealousy does not cover all the relations between man and woman in a civilised society. A concrete idea that embraces a certain relation between men and women from all sides is impossible: life is too complicated for that. Belinsky realised that when he abandoned his absolute viewpoint, and he therefore began to admire, for example, George Sand, whose works had seemed one-sided to him earlier.

The changes in Belinsky's social views were bound to be reflected most strongly, of course, in his conception of the role of art in social life. In the second period Belinsky asserted that art was

an end in itself. In the last period (and in this respect his last period is close to the first, differing from it by a much brighter colouring of the same idea) he challenges the so-called theory of art for art's sake, arguing that the idea of art divorced from life is an abstract and vague idea which could only be engendered by a people alien to lively social activity. Yet he still keeps repeating that art is art first and foremost, that is, "a reproduction of reality, a replica of the world, its re-creation, as it were". The only difference is that earlier, in the second period, he regarded the artist's duty from an absolute point of view, and now he regards it from the point of view of dialectics, comprehending therefore that the artist reproducing reality is himself affected by it. "Shakespeare's personality," says he, "is visible in his works, although it may appear that he is just as indifferent to the world described by him as the fate which saves or destroys his characters. In Walter Scott's novels one cannot fail to perceive the author as a man more remarkable for talent than for a conscious and broad understanding of life, a Tory, a Conservative and an aristocrat in his convictions and habits. The poet's personality is not something absolute, standing apart, outside all external influences.... The spirit of the people and of the times cannot affect him less than it does other men." Earlier Belinsky liked the idea of Pushkin's famous poem "The Rabble", now he is angered by it. "He who is a poet for himself and about himself, and looks down upon the mob," he says in his fifth article on Pushkin, "runs the risk of being the only reader of his works." Nor did Belinsky like the idea of Pushkin's "The Poet" now. The poet must be pure not only when Apollo claims him as a sacred sacrifice but at all times, throughout his life. A negative attitude towards the theory of art for art's sake is the strongest of the links which connect Belinsky's criticism with the criticism of the sixties and seventies. We shall now consider it in detail.

Belinsky was not always right in his attitude towards Pushkin. He believed that Pushkin used the word "rabble" with reference to the masses, but is that so? Belinsky's own articles and letters frequently contain attacks on the rabble and the mob. Can one on this basis accuse him of despising the people? In his "Answer to the Anonymous Author" Pushkin exclaims:

*Ridiculous is he who claims the high society's sympathy.  
The indifferent mob looks at the poet  
As if he were a wandering mountebank....*

The "high society" is not the "people", it is not the totality of poor men "living by the labour of their hands".

The idea of "The Poet" would also appear to have been misunderstood by Belinsky. Here Pushkin does not give the poets a licence to be base cads until Apollo claims them as his sacrifice. He says

merely that even a man infected by baseness is capable of revival under the influence of inspiration. This idea is expressed in the "Egyptian Nights"; it is a true and profound idea.

In general, Belinsky's arguments against the adherents of pure art are not very convincing. Not infrequently he is confused by his own arguments. What are the causes of these errors by a brilliant thinker?

Rebelling against Hegel, Belinsky took up the standpoint of the human individual. But the concept of the individual is an abstract concept. We know already that Belinsky had difficulty in breathing in an atmosphere of abstractness and that to the end of his days he attempted to elaborate a concrete world outlook. This tendency was extremely beneficial both for his social and literary views. But he was not always true to it; dissatisfaction with "vile Russian reality" drove him sometimes to arguments that were based only on certain abstract concepts. Such arguments were always of a noble nature *from the moral* point of view but frequently unsatisfactory *from the theoretical* one. Belinsky's judgments of Pushkin indicated above also belong to this category; Pushkin is the kind of poet that can only be understood if one abandons the abstract viewpoint.

But these were, in the final analysis, merely isolated errors. On the whole even the articles about Pushkin (and even these remarkable articles in particular) show how much he succeeded in the last period of his life in solving the task which he had set literary criticism already in his article on the Borodino anniversary: to be guided not by what seems to be but by what is in reality, not by opinion but by thought.

But when he began to approach the solution of this task, it appeared that the task itself was different from what it had seemed to him earlier. Earlier he had believed that thought reposed on itself, on its own internal development in accordance with the laws of "logic". He retained this conviction, borrowed from Hegel, long after his rebellion against reality. But towards the end of his life he abandoned Hegel's idealism entirely and turned towards Feuerbach's materialism.\* According to the materialist doctrine,

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\* This is particularly noticeable in his article "A Look at Russian Literature in 1846", where he expounds some basic tenets of Feuerbach's philosophy. Thus, he writes for instance: "You have great respect, of course, for intellect in a man?—Wonderfull! Then stop in awed amazement before this mass of the brain where all the intellectual functions take place, from which through the spine the nerve fibres spread throughout the entire organism, the nerves that are the organs of sensations and feelings and that are filled with fluids so fine that they elude material observation and speculation. Otherwise you will be amazed in man by the effects apart from the causes or, what is worse, you will invent causes unknown to nature and be satisfied with them. Psychology not based on physiology is just as untenable as physiology that is unaware of the existence of anatomy. Modern science does not content itself with that either: through chemical analysis it seeks to penetrate into the

consciousness does not develop from within itself: its development is conditioned by being. True, this thesis was not applied by Feuerbach to the explanation of history in general or the history of ideologies in particular. But this gap in Feuerbach's materialism was partly filled in, as far as art was concerned, by Hegel himself, who in his *Aesthetics*, despite his idealist preference for a priori constructions, frequently had recourse to purely materialist explanations of the development of art by the development of social relations. Besides, Belinsky himself was able to draw the proper inferences from the premises once these were found. As was noted above, in his last period he postulated a causal relation between the development of art and the "general nature of the epoch", i.e., the nature of the social movement inherent in a given epoch. Of course, he expressed himself rather vaguely here, and this vagueness was indicative of a lack of clarity in the views under discussion. But the lack of clarity is explained by the fact that these views were not fully elaborated, and at that time they could not have been fully elaborated. What was important was the fact that Belinsky's mind here, too, was able to determine the necessary direction, and also that even this insufficiently elaborated view was sometimes applied by Belinsky in his critical articles in a truly masterly fashion.

## IX

This is demonstrated, inter alia, by the same articles on Pushkin the weak points of which were indicated above. In Belinsky's words, Pushkin belonged to the school of art which was a thing of the past not only in Europe but even in Russia. History outstripped Pushkin, depriving a considerable part of his works of that vital interest which is excited by an urgent problem of the present day. Belinsky regarded Pushkin as the poet of the nobility. "Everywhere," said he, "you see him as a man who is faithful, body and soul, to the basic principle constituting the essence of the class depicted by him; in short, everywhere you see the Russian landowner.... He attacks everything in this class that is inconsistent with

mysterious laboratory of nature, and through observation of the embryo it seeks to trace the *physical* process of *moral* development." And later: "The mind without the flesh, without physiognomy, the mind that does not affect blood and is not affected by it is a logical dream, a dead abstract. The mind is the man in the body or, rather, the man through the body, in a word, the *individual*." One cannot miss here the basic theses of Feuerbach's philosophy, although it is apparent that the new, the *materialist*, system of concepts has not yet been fully assimilated by Belinsky and he therefore expresses himself rather imprecisely at times. In the literary review of the following year, written, one might say, not long before his death, Belinsky in speaking of the goals of our literature again expresses views that show Feuerbach's influence on him. But death prevented this new influence from consolidating fully. Feuerbach's views were fully and consistently represented in our literature by Belinsky's ardent admirer, N. G. Chernyshevsky.

humanity, but the principle of the class is an eternal truth for him... That is why there is so much love even in his satire, and negation itself looks so much like approval and admiration.... That was the reason why much of *Onegin* is obsolete now.... Without this, however, *Onegin* would not have been such a complete and detailed poem of Russian life, such a definite fact for the negation of a thought that is developing so rapidly in that society itself."

In explaining Pushkin's poetry by the social situation in Russia and the historical position of the estate to which our great poet belonged, Belinsky far outstripped our progressive criticism of the sixties and seventies, the main drawback of which was that it considered literary phenomena exclusively from the publicistic and not the sociological point of view. Belinsky's articles written in the final years of his activity contain a whole programme which has not yet been carried out by our literary criticism and which will be carried out only when it is able to adopt the sociological standpoint. This again demonstrates the brilliant power of his intellect.

It will be appropriate to note here one more circumstance which, so far as we know, has been ignored by the historians of our literature. In the final years of his life Belinsky insistently advocates "art's exclusive preoccupation with reality, apart from all ideals". ("A Review of Literature for 1847.") And yet it is very well known that at that time he was waging a resolute battle against Russian reality (suffice it to point out his famous letter to Gogol). This seeming contradiction is explained by the fact, *and only by the fact*, that in his critical articles he now adheres *not to the Hegelian but already to the Feuerbachian conception of reality*. This conception is different from Hegel's conception of the same subject: according to Feuerbach, reality is that which constitutes the *genuine essence of the object undistorted by fantasy*. Belinsky welcomes the emergence of the "*natural school*" precisely because it was, in his words, *not rhetorical but natural*. After Belinsky, the concept of reality was defended by Chernyshevsky.

We shall not discuss Belinsky's drama *The Fifty-Year-Old Uncle*. Only one thing may be said about it: it shows that, while endowed with the ability of a genius for "thinking in syllogisms", Belinsky was weak in "thinking in images". Of still less significance is our author's youthful poem "A Russian Legend" published in the *Listok* on May 27, 1831. Belinsky himself later referred to his poetic efforts in a highly humorous vein.

To sum up. Belinsky took up the work of a literary critic while he was strongly influenced by German philosophy. At the time of his "reconciliation" with reality, which took place under the influence of the same philosophy, he set himself the task of finding objective foundations for the criticism of works of art and of establishing a connection between these foundations and the logical



development of the absolute idea. He found these objective foundations in certain laws of the fine arts which we have formulated above under the name of Belinsky's aesthetic code. There is much that is true in these laws, and that which is untrue (or, rather, one-sided) is explained by the viewpoint of idealism to which he adhered following the example of his teacher in philosophy, Hegel. In the later years of his life he abandoned idealism, came close to Feuerbach's materialism and regarded the development of social classes and class relations, not the development of the absolute idea, as the last instance of criticism. Belinsky's criticism deviated from this new and highly productive trend, identical with the one in which the philosophical thought of contemporary progressive Germany developed, only on those occasions when he abandoned the viewpoint of dialectical philosophy and assumed the role of a propagandist of abstract ideas of "enlightenment" (the Standpunkt des Aufklärers, as a German would say). These deviations, inevitable under the conditions of his day, made him the father of the Russian "enlighteners"—which is what the progressive Russian critics of the sixties and seventies were.

It should be added that Feuerbach's materialism, far from interfering with these deviations, furthered them to a considerable extent: in his *historical and social* views Feuerbach the *materialist*, just like the French materialists of the eighteenth century, remained an *idealist*. That was why the most outstanding of our "enlighteners" of the sixties, N. G. Chernyshevsky, who consistently adhered to Feuerbach's materialism, did not cease at the same time to regard social life from the idealist viewpoint.

The first three acts of Belinsky's intellectual drama may be given these titles: 1) the abstract ideal and Fichtean philosophy; 2) reconciliation with "reality" under the influence of the "absolute" conclusions of Hegel's philosophy; 3) rebellion against "reality" and transition, in part, to the abstract point of view of the "individual" and in part to the concrete viewpoint of Hegel's *dialectics*.

The fourth act of this drama began with a complete breakaway from *idealism* and a transition to the *materialist* standpoint of Feuerbach. But the hand of death lowered the curtain after the opening scenes of this act.

Belinsky said of himself that he was not born a literary critic but a political pamphleteer. In actual fact he was born a philosopher and a sociologist who possessed all the qualities necessary to become an excellent critic and a brilliant publicist. The measure of his talent as a pamphleteer is shown by his famous letter to Gogol. We assume it to be familiar to the reader and therefore will not quote it; instead we shall cite a few lines from his article, published in the *Souremennik* in 1847, about the book the appearance of which gave Belinsky cause for writing his letter to Gogol.<sup>159</sup> Concluding the article, Belinsky says: "We have drawn this infer-

ence from the book—woe to the man whom nature itself created an artist, woe to him if, discontent with his path, he rushes along a road alien to him! An inevitable fall awaits him on this new road, a fall after which a return to the former path is not always possible."

These lines remind one of his thesis which forms part of his aesthetic code that the artist thinks not in syllogisms but in images, a thesis from which it follows that an artist of genius may at times be a very poor thinker.

Constitutionally weak and suffering in the final years of his life from tuberculosis, Belinsky died in St. Petersburg on May 26, 1848, between five and six in the morning.

Only a few friends attended his funeral at the cemetery (everyone knows now that he is buried at the Volkov cemetery). But these friends, according to Panayev, were joined by three or four strangers who suddenly appeared out of nowhere. They remained at the cemetery until the end of the ceremony and watched everything that took place there with the greatest attention.

The appearance of these "strangers" will become understandable if we recall that only death saved Belinsky from an acquaintance-ship with Dubbelt, the head of the "III Department" at the time. One is familiar with Naumov's painting *Belinsky Before His Death*. It depicts a real event which occurred on March 27, when the flat of the dying critic was visited by a gendarme with an invitation from Dubbelt.

When Belinsky's friends wanted to organise a lottery for the sale of his library to help his widow and daughter, who were left entirely without means, it was prohibited by the aforementioned "department".

Being of extremely nervous and outspoken disposition, Belinsky did not conceal his views either at the time when he became reconciled with "Russian reality" or when he rebelled against it. Let us cite two facts which characterise him extremely well. The first fact belongs to the time of his "reconciliation" and is narrated by Panayev. When Belinsky read the manuscript of his article about the Borodino anniversary to him, Panayev praised the article but tried to draw his attention to the impression it would produce on the reader. Belinsky interrupted him: "I know, I know that ... don't go on; they will call me a flatterer, a scoundrel, they will say that I am pandering to the authorities.... Let them. I am not afraid to express my convictions openly and directly, whatever people may think of me...." "I swear, I cannot be bought for anything!... It is easier for me to starve—I risk starving every day as it is (he smiled at this with bitter irony)—than to trample my human dignity, to abase myself before anyone or to sell myself...."

The other fact is narrated by Herzen and belongs to the final period of Belinsky's life.

It occurred at a party in the house of a man of letters. Chaadayev's "Philosophical Letter" was being discussed, a certain scholarly gentleman being of the opinion that Chaadayev had got what he deserved. Herzen who was present at the party argued with the scholarly gentleman. But the argument was rather dull until Belinsky intervened taking Chaadayev's side in a sharp and decisive manner. The end of the debate was most remarkable.

"In enlightened countries," said the scholarly gentleman with inimitable complacency, 'there are prisons for madmen who insult that which is honoured by the entire people ... and that is just as well.' Belinsky drew himself up to his full height, he was terrifying, he was great at that minute; folding his arms on his sick chest and looking straight at the scholarly gentleman, he replied in a harsh voice:—'And in still more enlightened countries there is the guillotine for the execution of those who find it just as well.'—Having said this, he threw himself into an armchair in exhaustion and fell silent. At the word 'guillotine' the host became pale, the guests looked uneasy, and there was a pause. The scholarly gentleman was annihilated...."

Such was the "impetuous Vissarion".

"Whatever may happen to Russian literature, however richly it may blossom," wrote N. A. Dobrolyubov in the fourth issue of the *Souremennik* for 1859, "Belinsky will always be its pride, its glory, its ornament. His influence is still felt in everything beautiful and noble that appears in this country; every one of our finest literary figures still admits that he owes the greater part of his development, directly or indirectly, to Belinsky.... In literary circles ... one would hardly encounter more than five or six dirty and caddish individuals who dared pronounce his name without respect. In all parts of Russia there are men who are full of enthusiasm for this man of genius, and, of course, these are the best people in Russia!..."

These lines show us the attitude of our most progressive writers of the sixties towards Belinsky. But we should not dare to say that they contain an entirely correct evaluation of Belinsky's significance. These lines lack something. Chernyshevsky, Dobrolyubov and their ideological allies were not in a position to evaluate fully the role of Belinsky in the history of our social thought in spite of all their enthusiasm for him. They were hampered in this case by the backwardness of contemporary social relations in Russia. Only when the development of these relations had made considerable progress; only when life itself had shifted to the concrete, that is, to the economic ground the great controversy between the Slavophiles and the Westerners about the historical path which our country was destined to follow—only then did it become possible to give, finally, a comprehensive evaluation of Belinsky's literary activity. Only then did it become clear that Belinsky was

not only a noble man in the highest degree, a great critic of artistic works and a highly sensitive publicist, but that he also showed an amazing insight in the formulation, if not in the solution, of the most profound and the most important problems of our social development. When this circumstance became clear, the fact also became clear that it was not enough to say of Belinsky that "his influence is still felt in everything beautiful and noble that appears in this country"; it became obvious that one had to add to this that *even nowadays every new step forward made by our social thought is a new contribution to the solution of those basic questions of social development whose presence Belinsky discovered by his brilliant sociological intuition, but which could not be solved by him owing to the extreme backwardness of contemporary Russian "reality"*. Only given this necessary amendment will Dobrolyubov's evaluation of Belinsky's literary activity become full and comprehensive.

# ON BELINSKY\*<sup>180</sup>

[1910]

"He who is not a thinker by nature, is indifferent to thought."

*Belinsky*

## I

We still do not know well enough the history of the intellectual development of eminent figures in our literature and social life. And we know least of all about the course of the intellectual development of the "people of the forties", the men of whom so much has been written and argued in this country. Why is that so? I believe that the reasons for it are, to a considerable extent, as follows.

The "people of the forties" were very much preoccupied with German idealist philosophy. This philosophy left a very deep imprint on the whole of their world outlook, therefore it should be studied by anyone who wishes to understand how the philosophical, literary and even social views of the "people of the forties" were formed. But it was precisely this condition that was not met by most Russian scholars in the last three decades of the past century; it is a known fact that ever since the seventies German idealist philosophy has been in disfavour in this country. While no scholar could fail to notice the fact that the "people of the forties" were enthusiastic about Fichte, Schelling and in particular Hegel, this enthusiasm for "metaphysics" was regarded and described mostly as a weakness, which could, of course, *be treated with indulgence, but which* should not be approved of on any account. The impression was of the days of yore when demons tempted pious hermits. Man is weak, and the Fiend is strong. The hermit at times succumbed to temptation, but he would not have been a pious man if his noble moral nature had not come to his aid in danger. In the end the demon was always disgraced while the hermit returned firmly to the path of virtue. The same thing happened to the "people of the forties". The demon of German love of speculation sometimes took possession of them very strongly, but all, or almost all of

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\* I wrote this article in preparation for Belinsky's centenary, but S. A. Vengerov has proved that Belinsky was born in 1811, not 1810. The celebration should be put off until next year; I do not know whether this will be done. In any case I believe that the questions discussed in this article are of interest irrespective of the centenary.

them, much to their credit, ended with a bold rebellion against the evil spirit of idealism and a triumphant conversion to the "realist" faith. This marked, properly speaking, the beginning of the epoch in their intellectual life which merits serious attention and warm sympathy; its previous epoch, the epoch of demoniac temptation, serves mainly for edification of the young on the subject of the inadvisability of being carried away by metaphysics. Take Belinsky, for instance. Who is not familiar with the edifying tale of how Hegel compelled him to become reconciled with reality? And were not all the progressive people of the seventies, eighties and nineties delighted with the sad tale's gratifying epilogue: the "impetuous Vissarion's" ironic farewell to the "philosophical cap of Yegor Fyodorych". The implacable, if regrettably poorly informed, opponents of Hegel were convinced that, having said an ironical farewell to the "cap", Belinsky overcame the influence of the great German idealist. Those who insisted that ridiculing the "cap" did not at all signify the end of that influence but only showed that Belinsky arrived at a different understanding of Hegel's philosophy through better comprehension of its dialectical aspects, were regarded as cranks with a penchant for absurd and harmful paradoxes.

Now circumstances have changed in the sense that now no one ignores or, at any rate, dares openly ignore German philosophy. But at the present time also too little attention is paid to the epochs in the development of German philosophical thought that are associated with the names of Schelling, Hegel and Feuerbach. Therefore at the present time also we still lack the preconditions that are absolutely essential for a correct understanding of the intellectual development of Belinsky, Herzen and other famous Westerners of the "forties", and not Westerners alone. To understand Russian Slavophilism properly, one would also do well to become thoroughly familiar with the teachings of Schelling, Hegel, Feuerbach, now almost forgotten in this country.

A. N. Pypin's well-known work *Belinsky, His Life and Correspondence* still remains, of course, an extremely respectable study. Compiled on the basis of Belinsky's correspondence, it contains most valuable and unique material for the biography of the great Russian critic. But one can hardly say that A. N. Pypin coped with his task as far as Belinsky's philosophical development was concerned.

He says: "It is difficult to divide man's inner development into definite periods; and it is difficult to point them out in the present biography as well, for although it represents extremely dissimilar moods within a comparatively short time, they succeed one another gradually, hesitatingly, with momentary recurrences of the past, and one can only indicate the more salient points that were reached by this or that mood. In this general sense the full devel-

opment of Belinsky's personality and activity may be assumed to begin at the time (late 1842 and early 1843) when he finally freed himself from idealist romanticism and when his views began to be dominated by a critical attitude towards reality, by the historical and the social viewpoint. This was the time of maturity, all too short but rich in results..." (Chapter VIII).

It is quite true that Belinsky's moods succeeded one another gradually and hesitatingly, with momentary recurrences of the past. But everything that follows these words is much too vague. First, "a critical attitude towards reality" does not characterise the world outlook of the man in question. The idealist world outlook is directly opposed to the materialist one, yet a critical attitude towards any given reality is possible both on the part of the idealist and the materialist. Second, "the historical and the social viewpoint" does not determine a world outlook either: an idealist and a materialist may equally adhere to that viewpoint. Third, the short period from the end of 1842 up to Belinsky's death (May 26, 1848) cannot be regarded as uniform in regard to the philosophical "mood". At the beginning of that period Belinsky continues to gravitate towards Hegel's idealism, while at the end of it he is firmly planted on the ground of Feuerbach's materialism. This transition from idealism to materialism has so far been very little studied; but, as we shall see presently, without an understanding of this transition it is impossible to comprehend even Belinsky's purely literary views. Let us attempt to clarify this transition, as far as it is possible given the scarcity of data pertaining to the subject.

## II

The data are indeed very scarce, at any rate much scarcer than in regard to the previous period, the epoch of "reconciliation" with reality and rebellion against it. The fact is that the most valuable data for the history of Belinsky's intellectual development are contained, of course, in his letters to friends: the Damocles' sword of censorship always hung over his articles.\*

But, as A. N. Pypin points out, from May 24, 1843 up to the beginning of 1846 letters from Belinsky that might provide material for our investigation are exceedingly rare. We must turn mainly to his articles, knowing beforehand that we shall find

\* In a letter to Botkin of February 6, 1843 he says: "Writing nothing and about nothing is becoming more and more impossible from day to day. You may babble of art as much as you like, but you may just as well spare the time and effort if you want to speak of serious matters, that is, morals and morality. A whole printer's sheet has been cut out of my article in the first issue of *O. Z.*—everything that was best, and this article was precious to me, as it was simple both in its idea and execution." The article "Russian Literature in 1842" is meant here.

there by no means all that our author would and could have said at the time.

The year 1842 produced an article, very interesting for our purposes, about the creative work of Y. Baratynsky. This article was written much later than the time of Belinsky's farewell to the "philosophical cap of Yegor Fyodorych". And yet we encounter in it the view of philosophy as "the science of the development in thinking of pre-temporal and non-substantial ideas".\* This is pure, indisputable Hegelianism. Having expressed this view, Belinsky speaks directly of history as "the science of the realization in facts, in actuality of the development of these pre-temporal ideas—the mysterious and primordial mothers of everything that exists, everything that is born and dies and yet lives eternally, despite everything!..." This is again the purest, indisputable Hegelianism. What does that mean? It looks as if, having said farewell to Hegel's "philosophical cap", Belinsky was again catching at it as a repository of all sorts of philosophical wisdom. One may say, perhaps (and A. N. Pypin would probably have said so), that we are dealing here with a temporary "hesitation", a "momentary recurrence of the past". But that would be unfounded. The "hesitations" and "recurrences" prove to have taken much more time than it would seem at first glance. Thus in his article about Derzhavin's works written in the year 1843 we find the same purely Hegelian view of ideas as the "starting-point" of any development, and in the same article our critic agrees (with some reservations, however) with "those speculative judges of the fine" who believe that "the subject of art is not the temporal and relative but the eternal and the unconditional".\*\* This is again Hegelianism, which is clearly discernible, moreover, in Belinsky's discussion of the course of the development of art in the ancient oriental states and in Ancient Greece. What are the causes for this persistent recurrence of the same "cap" which, as we are assured, was finally thrown away already in 1840?\*\*\*

The answer is to be sought in the same letter (to Botkin, of March 1, 1841) in which the famous breakaway from the "philosophical cap" is declared. Belinsky says there: "I have suspected for a long time that Hegel's philosophy is only an element, although a most important one, but that the absolute nature of its results is no good."\*\*\*\* These lines were written by Belinsky in connection with an excerpt, sent to him by Botkin, from the journal of

\* Belinsky's *Works*, 4th ed., Part VI, p. 302.

\*\* *Works*, Part VII, pp. 60-63.

\*\*\* "Damn my vile desire for reconciliation with vile reality! Long live the great Schiller, mankind's noble advocate, the bright star of salvation!" etc. (In a letter to Botkin, October 4, 1840.)

\*\*\*\* A. N. Pypin, *Belinsky, His Life and Correspondence*, Ch. VII. The author remarks in a note that he has a "milder expression" than Belinsky's concerning the absolute nature of the results of Hegelian philosophy.



Arnold Ruge and Echtermeyer, the *Hallische Jahrbücher*,<sup>161</sup> which served as the organ of the *Left Hegelians*. Belinsky says that the above-mentioned excerpt cheered him a great deal "and even revived me, as it were, and strengthened me for a moment". "I thank you for it, a hundred thanks," he adds. This shows that at the very moment when Belinsky was throwing away Hegel's philosophical cap, he sympathised very much with the Left wing of the Hegelian school. This should be noted all the more as it is confirmed by other data. Of greater importance than all the other data is, of course, Belinsky's attitude to the theoretical basis of his article "On the Anniversary of the Battle of Borodino" which caused such an uproar and was so conciliatory: "Of course, the idea which I attempted to develop in the article on Glinka's book *Essays on the Battle of Borodino* is basically correct, but I should also have developed the idea of negation...." These words show why it was that the absolute nature of Hegel's conclusions angered him so now: it made the development of the "idea of negation" impossible. The Left Hegelians attracted Belinsky's warm sympathy precisely because they renounced the absolute conclusions of Hegel's philosophy and began to develop the "idea of negation". But this idea, far from being alien to Hegel's philosophy, constitutes the soul of Hegel's famous dialectical method. Hegel himself elucidated with striking eloquence the significance of dialectics as a mighty instrument of "negation" (see for instance the first part, devoted to logic, of his *Encyclopaedia*).

Consequently, in rebelling against the "cap" in the name of the "idea of negation", Belinsky by no means ceased to be an Hegelian: he merely opposed one side of Hegel's philosophy to another. And since the dialectical side of this philosophy is far more important than the one that is characterised by absolute conclusions, it follows that Belinsky became a real Hegelian precisely at the time, and only at the time, when he quarrelled with the "philosophical cap of Yegor Fyodorych". This inevitable conclusion, as you see, is in rather sharp contradiction to the most widespread conception of the course of our author's intellectual development.

### III

To confirm what has just been said I shall also cite the following fact. Belinsky liked Botkin's article "German Literature in 1843" very much. But at the very beginning of that article Botkin characterises Hegel's philosophical system thus:

"His system was in its main outlines finished already before 1810; Hegel's view of modern times was fully formed in 1820. His political opinions, his concept of the state, for which he took England as a model, bear a clear imprint of the time of Restoration. This may explain why subsequent events in Europe appeared

vague to him. But the extraordinary accuracy and strength of Hegel's mind are apparent precisely in the fact that his system was formed independently of his personal opinions, so that the best critique of the results obtained by him is their testing by his own method. And it is in these results that one frequently sees the influence of his personal opinions. His philosophy of religion and philosophy of law would have been shaped differently, had he developed them from pure thought, without including in it the positive elements that lay at the base of contemporary civilisation; for it is from this that the contradictions and the false conclusions contained in his philosophy of religion and philosophy of law follow. The principles in them are always independent, free and true, while the conclusions and inferences are often near-sighted. In this circumstance lies the cause of the division of the school into the Right and the Left wings. One section of his disciples turned to the principles and rejected the conclusions, if they did not follow from the principles; they also introduced into his dialectical method all the vital questions of the time. This school was called the Left school. The Right school retained the conclusions alone, without bothering at all about their principles.\*

Botkin sympathises with the "Left school" precisely because it "introduced" into Hegel's dialectics "all the vital questions of the time". This expression is of course incorrect. One should have said that the Left Hegelians *used Hegel's dialectical method* for the solution of these questions. It is not the expression that matters, however, but the idea; and the idea here is the same as the one we found in Belinsky: the achievement of the "Left school" is that it rebelled against Hegel's absolute conclusions (bade farewell to the "philosophical cap") and shifted the dialectical aspect of his system into the foreground, that is, began to develop the "idea of negation".

I shall also add that Belinsky made it up with Bakunin, with whom he had been at odds for quite a long time, on hearing that the latter had joined the Left Hegelians. He believed that the direction taken by Bakunin at that time was bound to "lead him to a general revival..." (Letter of November 7, 1842).

#### IV

Well, once again: the rebellion against the "cap" was by no means a rebellion against Hegel. It merely signified our critic's transition from the "Right" school to the Left, his assimilation of the dialectical nature of Hegel's system and his rejection of its absolute conclusions. This is clearly seen in the articles which I

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\* This interesting article by V. P. Botkin was included in the second volume of his *Works* (St. Petersburg, 1891); the passage quoted here is on pp. 257-58.

have quoted above to corroborate the fact that, even having thrown away the "cap", Belinsky remained an adherent of Hegelian idealism.

In his article about the works of Baratynsky Belinsky argues that art without thought is "the same as a man without a soul—a corpse", and that nowadays all poets, even the great ones, must at the same time be thinkers. "Science, living, modern science," he concludes, "has now become the educator of art, and without it inspiration is powerless, talent impotent!..."\*

At the time of his enthusiasm for the absolute conclusions of Hegel's philosophy our critic reasoned differently. At that time he attacked Schiller and extolled Goethe, and now (that is, in fact, somewhat earlier: in January 1844) he wrote to Botkin: "Shall I confess a sin...: I cannot even think of Schiller without gasping for breath, and towards Goethe I begin to feel a kind of hatred; I swear, I can't bring myself to attack Menzel, although this gentleman still remains an idiot in my eyes."

Schiller was now dear to Belinsky because his works expressed the idea of negation.

In the article about Derzhavin's works Belinsky's new, *dialectical* viewpoint is vividly expressed in this passage:

"Nothing emerges suddenly, nothing is born ready made, everything that has an idea for a starting-point develops moment by moment, moving dialectically from a lower stage to a higher one. We observe this immutable law in nature, in man, in mankind. Nature did not appear all of a sudden, ready made, it had its days or moments of creation. The mineral kingdom preceded in it the vegetable kingdom, the vegetable preceded the animal. Every blade of grass passes through several stages of development so that the stem, the leaf, the blossom and the seed are nothing but stages in the life of the plant which follow each other in strict succession. Man passes through the physical stages of infancy, adolescence, youth, maturity and old age, to which correspond the moral stages that are expressed in the depth, the extent and the character of his consciousness. The same law is true of societies and mankind."\*\*

It follows that art is also subject to the law of dialectical development. Belinsky recognises this categorically: "The same law is true of art as well." But if that is so, Belinsky clearly could not agree now with those "speculative judges of the fine" who wanted to regard art as an entirely separate world existing independently of other spheres of consciousness and history. True, he still recognises, as we have seen above, that the subject of art is not the temporal and the relative, but the eternal and the unconditional. Yet

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\* *Works*, Part VI, pp. 304 and 324.

\*\* *Ibid.*, Part VII, p. 60.

now he believed that art does not abase itself when it succumbs to historical influences. He argued that the eternal is expressed in time, the unconditional is limited by the form of manifestation, the infinite becomes accessible to contemplation in the finite. Having arrived at this conclusion, which is fully in keeping with the genuine, that is, the dialectical, nature of Hegel's philosophy, he saw at once that the absolute point of view is irreconcilable with the view of art as a phenomenon that is subject to the law of development, like everything that exists.

"If aesthetics takes for its basis nothing but ideas and their dialectical development, leaving aside beliefs and history", he says, "it may turn out that the works of Greek art are beautiful, whereas the works of Indian or Egyptian art have nothing to do with creativity and are mere products of ignorance and savagery; that Gothic architecture is the embodiment of bad taste; that French literature is splendid while German literature is rubbish, or vice versa, depending on the starting-point of aesthetics."\*

Some explanations will be appropriate here. In Belinsky's exposition it appears that even aesthetics adhering to the absolute viewpoint would have to deal with the dialectical development of ideas. The reader may therefore ask the question: what about the irreconcilability of the absolute and the dialectical viewpoints, then? But the point is that the aesthetics assumed here by Belinsky would deal with the dialectical development of ideas outside time and space, that is, in the realm of absolutely abstract thinking. And this development, having nothing to do with the actual development of ideas in the process of the historical development of mankind, would lead to absolute conclusions, that is, *in this particular case*, to absolute aesthetic criteria. Belinsky himself proclaimed such criteria at the time of his enthusiasm for the absolute "cap". Moreover, one may even say that to the end of his life he was to some extent influenced by such criteria. However, while he was not always consistent in applying to some of his literary judgments the dialectical method now assimilated by him, he formulates with complete accuracy the task confronting aesthetics that abandons the absolute point of view and accepts the dialectical one.

He wrote: "The task of true aesthetics is not to decide what art should be, but to define what art is. In other words: aesthetics should not discuss art as something presupposed, as a kind of ideal which can be realised only in accordance with its theory; no, it should examine art as a subject which existed long before it and to the existence of which it owes its own existence."\*\*

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\* Ibid., p. 64.

\*\* Ibid., same page.

This is undoubtedly a true thought. It was later expressed, almost in the same words, by Hippolyte Taine in his *Philosophy of Art*. Here are his words:

"The new method which I attempt to follow and which is now beginning to be introduced in all the moral sciences consists in regarding all human productions, and artistic productions in particular, as facts and phenomena the characteristic traits of which must be designated and the causes of which must be found—and nothing more. The science thus interpreted neither condemns nor forgives, it only indicates and explains. It does not tell you, 'Despise Dutch art—it is too coarse; admire only Italian art.' In like manner, it will not tell you, 'Despise Gothic art—it is morbid; admire only Greek art.' It gives everyone complete freedom to follow their own inclinations, to prefer that which agrees with their temperament, and to study more attentively that which conforms more with the development of their spirit. As for aesthetics itself, it treats with sympathy all forms of art and all schools, even those which seem most opposite: it considers them to be different manifestations of the human spirit."\*

This view must seem necessary as long as we remain in the purely scientific domain: aesthetics as a science does not provide any theoretical foundations that would permit us to say that Greek art deserves our admiration and Gothic art our condemnation, or vice versa. The matter presents itself in quite a different light, of course, once we leave the sphere of aesthetics. Works of art are facts and phenomena that are produced by the social relations of men. Together with changes in the social relations men's aesthetic tastes and, consequently, the works of artists also change. A man of any given social epoch will always tend to prefer works of art in which the tastes of that epoch are expressed. In a society divided into classes the tastes of a given epoch often vary considerably depending on the position of the classes that make it up. Since any given art critic is himself the product of his social environment, his aesthetic judgments will always be determined by the properties of that environment. He will therefore never be able to avoid preferring one school in literature or art to another, the opposite of the former. All this is correct, but it does not refute either Belinsky or Taine. On the contrary, it shows that they were quite correct in rejecting absolute artistic criteria. Scientific aesthetics becomes impossible wherever such criteria are recognised.

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\* «Чтения об искусстве». Translated by A. N. Chudinov, St. Petersburg, 1904, p. 11. [Plekhanov is quoting from the Russian translation of Hippolyte Taine's *Philosophie de l'Art*.]

## V

I would have to repeat myself if I wanted to discuss Belinsky's literary views here.\* I shall limit myself to a subject which I have not touched upon in my previous articles—Belinsky's attitude to folk poetry.

Even people most favourably disposed towards our great critic do not represent that attitude quite accurately. Thus, A. N. Pypin says, for example, that soon after Belinsky's death the incompleteness of his views became apparent in various respects. First and foremost the respected scholar asserts that Belinsky neglected all of the old, pre-Petrine literature and folk poetry, which he mentioned only rarely and incidentally. In A. N. Pypin's words, "the pre-Petrine folk past was only a primitive unconscious epoch, which has ceased to be of interest to us since the epoch of real enlightenment began and proper literature emerged; folk poetry was childish babbling compared to the artistic consciousness of proper artistic literature".\*\*

All this is so, yet not so. It is true that in Belinsky's eyes the pre-Petrine folk past was an unconscious epoch or, to be more exact, that during that epoch faint gleams of consciousness flashed only rarely, in his view. It is also true that Belinsky considered folk poetry to be childish babbling compared to the artistic consciousness of "artistic" literature. But it is hardly true that Belinsky touched on folk poetry only incidentally. Can one call incidental the series of articles published in *Otechestvenniye Zapiski* in 1841 and devoted precisely to folk poetry? This series takes up 247 pp. in Vol. V of Belinsky's *Works*.

We see that this allegedly "incidental" series of articles is actually rather lengthy. Belinsky himself later made additions to the original text with the aim of reprinting it in the critical history of Russian literature which he planned. This shows that his interest in folk poetry did not disappear later either.

One cannot, of course, dispute the fact that our critic went too far in his reaction against the romantic enthusiasm for folk poetry. But one should also remember that he did not have a low opinion of all folk poetry; he rated Greek folk poetry very highly. He did treat the poetry of the Russian people almost contemptuously, but there is a reason for that which merits the greatest attention and bears witness to the remarkable power of Belinsky's intellect and the depth of his intellectual demands.

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\* They have been considered in my articles: "V. G. Belinsky" (in *A History of Nineteenth-Century Russian Literature*, ed. by D. N. Ovsyaniko-Kulikovsky) and "The Literary Views of Belinsky" in my *symposium Twenty Years*. I refer the reader to these works.<sup>102</sup>

\*\* *A History of Russian Literature*, Vol. I, p. 20.

This is worth considering in detail. A. N. Pypin goes on: "Second, because of the artistic interest which literature presented Belinsky could not see its great historico-cultural interest."\*

This is again not true. Belinsky states categorically, referring to Russian folk songs, that folk poetry "better than history itself may demonstrate the inner life of the people, be the measure of their civic feeling ... the mirror of their spirit."\*\*

This is the exact opposite of what A. N. Pypin says. What is the point here?

The point is that Belinsky's view was not limited to the "artistic interest" of folk literature but, on the contrary, attempted to penetrate into its *content*. And that content seemed to him to be very poor, not only in the Russian people but in all the Slavonic peoples. In his words, the natural poetry of all these peoples is rich in feeling and expression but "poor in content, it lacks the element of the general".\*\*\* That was why he held it in low esteem, much too low even. This is understandable.

But how did he explain the poverty of content of Slavonic folk poetry? In raising this question, we touch on one of the most interesting aspects of Belinsky's world outlook.

He assumed that the content of folk *poetry* is determined by the content of the *life* of the people. Where the content of folk poetry is poor, the life of the people is also poor. If our *Lay of Igor's Host*<sup>163</sup> cannot be compared with *Iliad* or even the mediaeval poems of the West, this is because the life of the Russian people in the twelfth century was incomparably poorer in content than the life of Ancient Greece or Western Europe in the corresponding epochs of the development of oral folk art. To corroborate this idea Belinsky draws a parallel between the life of mediaeval Western Europe and Russian social life in the twelfth century.

"What a great difference!" he exclaims. "Feudalism contained an idea; the apanage system was apparently accidental, it was the product of natural, patriarchal conceptions of the right of inheritance. Feudalism was the outcome of the system of conquest; a whole people moved to conquer another people; having conquered the latter, it settled down on the conquered land. Since the conqueror's personal power derived not from birth but from courage and merit, the man elected head of the host took part of the conquered land for himself and divided the rest between his confederates. This produced innumerable consequences, without an understanding of which even the contemporary history of Europe cannot be explained."\*\*\*\*

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\* *A History of Russian Literature*, Vol. I, p. 20.

\*\* *Works*, Part V, p. 64.

\*\*\* *Ibid.*, p. 65.

\*\*\*\* *Ibid.*, pp. 83-84.

This parallel is not irreproachable theoretically. One cannot regard a whole political system as an outcome of chance; Belinsky himself considers the system of apanages to be the product of "natural, patriarchal conceptions of the right of inheritance". A system that is produced by the "*natural*" conceptions of a given people is obviously not a chance one. But that is in passing. The main thing is that our author believes it impossible to explain "even the contemporary history of Europe" without taking into account the conquests which were the starting-point of West-European feudalism.

The conquests led to the emergence in West-European society of the class of "patrons", on the one hand, and the class of "vassals", free warriors, on the other. Both of these classes dominated the people in the proper sense of the word who became the slaves of the conquerors. This was the cause of the incessant class struggle which left a deep imprint on the whole of social life in the West.

## VI

"The right of the aristocracy was at first nothing but the right of an estate," says Belinsky, "that was justly proud of its lofty sentiments, its noble mode of thinking, and that believed itself, not without reason, to have the right to look down on the low rabble as being predestined by nature for the lower purposes of life. The emergence of towns and of the middle estate was the first step towards changing these relations. Even before that the struggle between the sovereigns and the feudal lords began, a struggle that was not a chance one but the natural outcome of the state of affairs, a struggle necessary for the formation of the state as a unified political body. Monarchism found a natural ally in the towns, as the towns did in monarchism, and both of them stood up against the knights, until the knights, who degenerated into the aristocracy or courtiers, appeared again as the natural ally of monarchism and a different kind of foe, but still the foe of both the middle estate and the people."\*

This particular "*idea*", or rather—this fact of conquest and class struggle in West-European society, produced the rich content of West-European social life. "This situation," says Belinsky, "produced the struggle [we have seen that it was a class struggle or, if you wish, the struggle of the estates.—G.P.] that resulted in rational development."\*\*

The rational development of social life, in its turn, introduced rich content into oral folk art and, in particular, into folk poetry.

And what do we see in old Russia? Here we do not find "even

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\* *Works*, p. 85.

\*\* *Ibid.*, Part V, p. 84.



a shadow", in Belinsky's words, of what happened in the West.

"The apavage system was exactly the same as the landowner system: the landowner father at his death shares his peasants equally among his sons. There was no conquest in Russia, so that the solitary element of popular life, unopposed by any other element, was deprived of the possibility of development.... There was no idea in the internecine strife of the princes, because its cause was not tribal differences, not the struggle of heterogeneous elements, but merely personal disagreements. The people did not play any role here, did not take any part. The people of Chernigov fought the people of Kiev not out of tribal hatred but at the princes' orders. This sort of strife is depicted in a masterly fashion in Pushkin's story *Dubrovsky* as the squabble between the Troyekurov's peasants and Dubrovsky's peasants: the lords quarrelled, and the servants began to fight, trample each other's fields, kill the cattle and set fire to the huts."

These arguments cannot be accepted without some major reservations. First, in the early feudal epoch the attitude of the population of the various provinces towards their princes was quite different from the attitude, later, of the "baptized property" to their landowners. The people of Chernigov, Kiev, etc., very rarely showed a desire to fight each other at the princes' orders alone. The rivalry of the various provinces of the Russian land is explained by much deeper causes. Very frequently one has to recognise here precisely "the struggle of heterogeneous elements". There is no doubt, of course, that the heterogeneity of elements which resulted in the struggle of the various Russian provinces did not have the same progressive significance as the heterogeneity that conditioned the class struggle in West-European society. The mutual struggle of the classes always, or almost always (that is, except in those cases when it remains unresolved due to the balance of the antagonistic social forces), facilitates the progress of social relations to a greater extent than the mutual struggle of states or provinces. Thus, Belinsky is not completely wrong here either. Second, a conquest taken by itself does not determine the social consequences that follow from it. In different countries and at different times it leads to quite dissimilar consequences. Everything depends on the level of economic development of the conquerors and the conquered. Besides, feudalism was established in Western Europe much later than the conquest of the Gallo-Roman world by the Germanic tribes, so that it would be wrong to explain it by conquest alone. But when Belinsky's views were formed, this thought very rarely occurred even to specialists in history: it is well known what enormous significance was ascribed to conquests by Augustin Thierry, Mignet, Guizot and other outstanding French historians. Lastly, now the view

is gaining currency in Russian historical and sociological literature that Russia too did not escape the process of feudalisation. If this view is accepted, it may appear that Belinsky's opposition of Russia and the West is completely unfounded. One should not forget, however, that the above-mentioned process, everywhere identical in its essence, went on in different countries with various degrees of intensity and under different historical conditions, which led to extremely dissimilar economic and political results. I shall take Ancient Egypt as my example. Feudalism existed there too, but the economic and political consequences of Egyptian feudalism were quite different from the economic and political consequences of West-European feudalism. This being so, it is appropriate to ask ourselves the question—where is it, in the East or in the West, that we find social results of feudalisation that were most favourable for the progressive development of the society or, to use an expression more in Belinsky's style, for "rational development". There can be no doubt on this account: the East, Russia included, was far inferior in this respect to the West. It appears that here again Belinsky was not so mistaken as might be supposed at first glance. In its real essence his opinion was quite correct: in the West the favourable conditions for "rational development" were much more numerous than in our native land; hence the difference in the content of folk poetry—its comparative richness in the peoples of the West and comparative poverty in the Russian people.

## VII

Hegel said: "Der Widerspruch ist das Fortleitende" (contradiction is that which leads forward); Belinsky applied this profound idea of Hegel to the problem of the socio-political and literary development of peoples, giving it a slightly different formulation; he declared that rational development was the result of struggle caused by heterogeneity of social composition. In insisting on this (let me remind the reader: *after* his parting with the "cap"), he remained a true and extremely consistent disciple of Hegel. But—which Hegel? Not the Hegel who claimed that his philosophy was an absolute system, but the one who spoke eloquently during his lectures of the invincible power of dialectics that calls up for judgment all that exists on earth and implacably sentences to annihilation everything obsolete, everything that has lost its historical meaning. That is why in the already familiar article on the works of Baratynsky, the article in which Belinsky still expresses himself as a pure-blooded idealist believing in the existence of "pre-temporal and non-substantial ideas", he treats reality quite differently from when he wrote his articles "On the

Anniversary of the Battle of Borodino" and about "Menzel".\*

"Reality?" he asks. "But what is reality if not the realisation of the eternal laws of reason? Any other reality is a temporary eclipse of the light of reason, a morbid vital process—and can there be an eternal eclipse of the sun, does not the sun appear brighter and more luminous after an eclipse?... One should be able to distinguish between rational reality, which alone is real, and non-rational reality, which is illusory and transient."\*\*

Earlier he said: all that is real is rational; now he says: only that which is rational is real; the rest is an illusion. Earlier he was true to Hegel the creator of an absolute system; now he is true to Hegel the dialectician. *The realisation of the fact that not all that which exists is real is Belinsky's principal theoretical gain which manifested itself in his parting with the "cap".* He is now just as idealistic as earlier, only now his idealism is permeated through and through with the spirit of dialectics. The fact that he remained an idealist was the cause of his chief theoretical mistakes at the time; while the fact that his idealism was permeated through and through with the spirit of dialectics enabled him to throw considerable light on the social conditions which determine the spiritual and social development of mankind; in short, dialectical idealism is the root of both the strong and the weak points of Belinsky's world outlook at that time.

First let us consider the strong points.

Y. M. Steklov found in the works of Chernyshevsky the view of class struggle as the main motive force of social development in the West, and concluded that the famous author of *Commentaries on Mill* was very close to Marx's viewpoint. I have shown that this was a great mistake, because the same view of the historical significance of the class struggle was characteristic of M. P. Pogodin, who was very far from scientific socialism.\*\*\* Now I have to turn again to the article by the Moscow historian which I cited in my objections to Y. M. Steklov.

The reader may remember that the article was called "A Parallel Between Russian History and the History of the West-European States, with Reference to the Beginning" and appeared in the first issue of the *Moskvityanin* for 1845. In speaking of the West, M. P. Pogodin expressed a view that was very close to the one expressed a few years earlier by Belinsky in his articles on Russian folk poetry. He wrote:

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\* In connection with this period of his development see my article, already mentioned above, "V.G. Belinsky", as well as the article "Belinsky and Rational Reality" in the symposium *Twenty Years*.<sup>161</sup>

\*\* *Works*, Part VI, p. 310.

\*\*\* See my article "Once Again on Chernyshevsky", published in the April issue of the *Sovremenniy Mir* for 1910.

"Conquest, division, feudalism, towns with their middle estate, hatred, struggle, emancipation of the towns—that is the first tragedy of the European trilogy."

"Autocracy, aristocracy, the struggle of the middle estate, revolution—that is the second."

"The statutes, the struggle of the lower classes ... the future is in the hand of God."

In turning to Russian history, M. P. Pogodin repeated almost word for word what Belinsky had said.

"At the very first glance we observe that in this country, at the beginning of it [of Russian history.—*G.P.*] there is not a single [phenomenon.—*G.P.*], at any rate not in the same form: there is no division, no feudalism, no sanctuary towns, no middle estate, no slavery, no hatred, no pride, no struggle...."\*

This article by the representative of the "official nationality" caused displeasure in the camp of the thorough-bred Slavophiles; P. V. Kireyevsky answered it with the article "On Old Russian History", published in the third issue of the *Moskvityanin* for the same year. But P. Kireyevsky's objections to Pogodin do not touch upon the latter's main idea. P. Kireyevsky fully accepts it. He says: "You assume the main difference between Old Russia and Western Europe to be that in the West states were based on conquest, which *this country did not know*.—This is an undoubted truth."\*\* He reproaches Pogodin only for a somewhat inconsistent attitude to this basic idea, and also for some of his extremely disrespectful references to the state of education and the qualities of Russian popular spirit in the epoch of the first princes. This disagreement on secondary questions is of no consequence for us whatever. It is important that, like Belinsky and Pogodin, P. Kireyevsky (of course, together with all the other Slavophiles\*\*\*) regarded the absence of conquest in this country and of a class struggle conditioned by it as the main distinction between Russian and West-European history. Something quite paradoxical comes to light: with regard to the basic question on the course of our history, as compared to the history of the West, Belinsky did not disagree at all with his most implacable adversaries, whom

\* When I made my objections to Y. M. Steklov, I did not have M.P. Pogodin's article at hand and I quoted it from Barsukov's notes. Now I have it. The lines quoted here are on pp. 3-4 of the scientific section of the first issue of the *Moskvityanin* for 1845.

\*\* *Moskvityanin*, 1845, No. 3, p. 12, the Sciences section.

\*\*\* A. S. Khomyakov wrote in 1845: "The beginnings of Western Europe are one thing and our own quite another. There everything appeared on Roman soil inundated by the invasion of Germanic hosts; there everything emerged from conquest and from the age-long struggle, imperceptible but continuous, between the victor and the vanquished.... Russia is quite different." ("Letter to St. Petersburg", *Moskvityanin*, 1845, No. 2, the Literature section, p. 77.)

he so readily attacked both in his articles and letters.\* Where did their disagreements begin, then?

Before answering that question, I believe it will be useful to remind the reader of the following comparison between *Otechestvenniye Zapiski* (Belinsky's organ at the time) and the *Mayak* (the organ of Burachok the obscurantist) made by another Kireyevsky—Ivan.

In his "Review of the Present State of Literature" this most gentle Slavophil writes with quiet malice:

"*Otechestvenniye Zapiski* endeavour to surmise and assimilate the view of things which, in their opinion, constitutes the latest expression of European enlightenment; therefore, while changing their mode of thinking frequently, they always remain true to one preoccupation only—to express the most fashionable ideas, the latest sentiments from Western literature.

"The *Mayak*, on the contrary, notices only that side of Western enlightenment which seems to it harmful or immoral and, to be more certain of avoiding any sympathy with it, rejects all European enlightenment in its entirety without entering into any doubtful analysis. Therefore the one praises that which the other abuses; the one is delighted with that which angers the other; even identical expressions which in the vocabulary of one journal denote the highest degree of merit, like *Europeanism*, *the last stage of development*, *human wisdom*, etc., in the language of the other denote extreme censure. Therefore, without reading one of them, you may learn its opinions from the other merely by interpreting all the words in it in the opposite sense" (*Moskvityanin*, 1845, No. 3, the Criticism section, p. 21).

The malice here is that, in the words of I. Kireyevsky, *Otechestvenniye Zapiski*, i.e., Belinsky again, is endeavouring only to pick up and express the idea that is most fashionable in the West. This does not merit an answer, as anyone who knows the depth and sincerity of Belinsky's thinking will understand. Besides, the comparison between the above-mentioned organ and the *Mayak* could be of no serious significance. But if we oppose the opinions

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\* During his travels in the south of Russia Belinsky writes in a letter from Odessa to his Moscow friends: "In Kaluga I ran into I. A. [obviously Ivan Aksakov.—G.P.]. A fine young man! A Slavophil—but as nice as if he had never been a Slavophil. In general I have lapsed into awful heresy and begin to think that there may really be decent men among the Slavophiles. It makes me sad to think so, but truth above all!" But the heresy, it would appear, did not take firm root in his heart. In a letter from Simferopol Belinsky expresses himself in much sharper fashion: "... Having entered the Crimean steppe, we saw three nations that were new to us: the Crimean sheep, the Crimean camels and the Crimean Tartars. I believe that they are different species of the same genus, or different tribes of the same nation: they have so much in common in their physiognomies. If they do not speak one language, they nevertheless understand each other well. And all of them look decidedly Slavophil."

of Belinsky not to the opinions of the *Mayak* but to those of the *Moskvityanin*, even for that short period when it was in the hands of orthodox Slavophiles, we shall have to repeat, with some exceptions, precisely that which is said in the quotation from I. Kirevsky's article.

Belinsky praised that which the Slavophiles abused; he took delight in that which angered them; even the identical expressions which in Belinsky's vocabulary denoted the highest degree of merit, e.g., *Europeanism*, *the last stage of development*, *duality*, *heterogeneity of elements*, *their struggle*, etc., denoted extreme censure in the Slavophile language. Therefore, without reading the *Moskvityanin*, one could learn its views from *Otechestvenniye Zapiski* by merely interpreting all their words in the opposite sense. True, to do that, one had to be thoroughly conversant with Hegel's philosophy.

As I noted above, Belinsky, who already in 1841 declared the class struggle to be the starting-point of rational development, was quite true to the spirit of Hegel the dialectician, who willingly repeated, "contradiction is that which leads forward!" Therefore expressions like the mutual struggle of heterogeneous elements, etc., were indeed given a place of honour in our critic's vocabulary, and for the same reason the same expressions denoted extreme censure when used by the Slavophiles.

And all this despite their complete agreement on the fact of conquest in the West and absence of conquest in Russia. Belinsky agreed with the Slavophiles that the conquest served as the starting-point for the entire social and spiritual development of Western Europe. But, while the Slavophiles believed the course of this development to be a kind of sad mistake or irrevocable misfortune, Belinsky considered it to be rational and a source of spiritual richness. He also agreed with the Slavophiles that Russia did not know conquest. But, while the Slavophiles saw this as a precious gift from fate, Belinsky found it to be the cause of our spiritual poverty. Men slandered him in saying that he held the Russian people in contempt. He maintained that "from the works of Russian folk poetry one can prove the people's great and powerful spirit" and that "all our folk poetry is a living proof of infinite power of spirit".\* But he did not see in Russian history that struggle which in the West did not cease, in his words, for a moment,\*\* and he used this to explain the backwardness of the infinitely powerful spirit of the Russian people. In the absence of internal causes for development one had to turn to external ones. Hence our author's warm sympathy for Peter the Great's reforms: the Russian spirit had "to be awakened from outside".\*\*\* It also

\* *Works*, Part V, p. 64.

\*\* *Ibid.*, p. 84.

\*\*\* *Ibid.*, p. 64.

explains the reason, in his own words, "why the greatest and most national Russian poet Pushkin cultivated his muse not in the maternal lap of folk poetry but on European soil, why his training came not from *The Lay of Igor's Host*, Kirsha Danilov's fairy-tale poems, or folk-lore songs but from Lomonosov, Derzhavin, Fonvisin, Bogdanovich, Krylov, Ozerov, Karamzin, Dmitriev, Zhukovsky and Batyushkov—prose and poetry writers who were imitators and not national writers at all, with the exception of Krylov alone, whose fables, while being national in character, are not quite an original phenomenon, since their models were found by Krylov not in folk poetry but in the works of La Fontaine the Frenchman".\*

Contradiction is that which leads forward. When it is absent in internal life, one has willy-nilly to borrow the motive force of social progress from the outside.

## VIII

At the time of his savage skirmishes with the Slavophiles Belinsky was a dialectician to his finger-tips, whereas in their world outlook the dialectical element was totally absent. Hegel would have called them metaphysicians of the first water.

Take, for instance, A. S. Khomyakov. In his "Letter to St. Petersburg" quoted above, he said, describing the consequences of conquests in the West: "Incessant war was incessantly lulled by temporary peace treaties, and this eternal vacillation produced a highly conditional life, the life of a contract or agreement subject to the laws of logical and, so to speak, material calculation. A correct algebraic formula was indeed the ideal for which the entire life of the European peoples was unconsciously striving." The West-European constitutions were, incidentally, the formulas which expressed, in the Slavophiles' opinion, the relationship of the heterogeneous elements that fought each other unceasingly in West-European society. The struggle which subjected the entire life "to the laws of logical and, so to speak, material calculation" also left its imprint on the spiritual make-up of Western man. The West's spiritual life is marked by the domination of the rational. Things are different with us. In Russia, "there has been no struggle, no conquest, no eternal war, no eternal contracts; she is not the product of a condition but of organic living development: she has grown, she was not constructed".\*\* Russia therefore does not need a constitution (that is a contract between the monarch and the people), but a loving union between the tsar and the "land". For the same reason a real Russian is never too rational, his think-

\* Ibid., p. 65.

\*\* *Moskvityanin*, 1845, No. 2, the Literature section, p. 77.

ing is marked by that enviable and salutary integrity thanks to which knowledge goes hand in hand with faith and which safeguards us from all sorts of social upheavals. I. Kireyevsky says the same: "In almost none of the peoples of Europe did statehood emerge from quiet development of national life and national self-consciousness, where the prevailing religious and social concepts, embodied in everyday relations, grow and gather strength naturally and are bound into a unity of thought that is correctly reflected in the harmonious integrity of the social organism. On the contrary, the social life of Europe, by some strange historical accident, almost everywhere originated violently, from the mortal struggle of two hostile tribes, from the oppression of the conquerors, from the opposition of the vanquished and, finally, from those accidental conditions which were the external outcome of the quarrels of antagonistic disproportionate forces."\*

On the contrary, Russia did not know either statehood that emerged from violence or education permeated with rationality. The Russian mind, which lies at the base of the Russian way of life, was formed and trained under the guidance of the fathers of the Orthodox Church. The vast land of Russia was since olden times covered by a great number of monasteries that served as the sources of enlightenment. "From them," Kireyevsky says, "the light of consciousness and science flowed uniformly and undivided in meaning to the various tribes and principalities. For not only the spiritual concepts of the people proceeded from them but all of its conceptions of morals, social life and law, passing through their educational influence, returned from them to the social consciousness taking one common direction. Being recruited from all the classes of the people without preference, from both the higher and the lower strata of society, the clergy in their turn spread their higher knowledge throughout all the classes and strata, drawing it directly from the original sources, from the very centre of contemporary enlightenment, which was then in Constantinople, Syria and the Holy Mount."\*\*

The Slavophilism of Khomyakov, the Kireyevskys, K. Aksakov and others, that differed essentially from the "Slavophilism" of Alexander I's times, was the philosophy of Russian history created by the ideologists of the landowning estate under the strongest influence of the class struggle in the West.\*\*\* The history of Belinsky's intellectual development was the history of a Russian *raznochinets* of genius who had an intuitive tendency to side, spir-

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\* In the article "On the Nature of the Enlightenment in Europe and Its Relation to the Enlightenment in Russia", *Collected Works*, Moscow, 1861, Vol. II, p. 240.

\*\* Ibid., pp. 259-60.

\*\*\* This will be shown in detail in the *Sovr. Mir* in the article now in preparation by me, "The Slavophiles and the Westerners".<sup>166</sup>



itually at least, with the great social movement in which the continuous class struggle inherent in Western society was expressed at the time. Belinsky was carried away by that which frightened the Slavophiles. I. Kireyevsky wrote: "Having originated through violence, the European states had to develop through upheavals."\* The "impetuous Vissarion" would have agreed with I. Kireyevsky in this, too. But, having parted with the "philosophical cap of Yegor Fyodorych", he was able now to value the great significance of the European upheavals for the whole world. It is not for nothing that he made it up with Bakunin after an article in which the latter argued that "the passion for destruction is a creative passion". It is not for nothing that our protectors instinctively felt him to be a "shaker of the foundations" even when he spoke of purely literary questions. Protectors are often gifted with excellent intuition.

## IX

Now let us take a look at the weak aspects of Belinsky's world outlook in the period under discussion.

While the *strong* points of this world outlook are explained by the fact that it was permeated through and through with the *dialectical* spirit, its *weak* points are rooted in the fact that Belinsky's dialectics, like Hegel's, was *idealist*.

Despite those critics and historians of literature who believe that Belinsky preferred, to the end of his life, to consider literature not from an historical but from an artistic viewpoint, I shall remind the reader once again that in actual fact the historical view of poetry prevailed with him since the time when he accepted the dialectical standpoint. Already in 1841 he says outright: "The poetry of any people has close ties with its history; the mysterious psyche of the people is equally contained in poetry and history, so that its history may be explained by its poetry and its poetry by its history."\*\* And, as if to leave no doubt about the kind of history he means, he adds: "We have in mind here the internal history of the people, which explains the external and chance events in its life."\*\*\* But what is this internal history itself explained by? The people's world outlook. "The source of the people's internal history," says Belinsky, "is in its 'world outlook', in its direct view of the world and the mystery of being."\*\*\*\* This is, of course, pure idealism. On another occasion, although about the same time, too, Belinsky expresses himself even more clearly:

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\* Ibid., p. 249.

\*\* Works, Part V, p. 62.

\*\*\* Ibid.

\*\*\*\* Ibid., p. 63.

"Literature is the consciousness of the people: in literature, as in a mirror, its spirit and life are reflected; in literature, as in a fact, may be seen the destination of the people, the place occupied by it in the great family of the human race, a stage in the world historical development of the human spirit which it expresses through its being. The source of a people's literature is not to be found in some external stimulus or external impetus, but only in its world outlook. The world outlook of any people is the kernel, the essence (substance) of its spirit, that instinctive intrinsic view of the world with which it is born as with a direct revelation of the truth and which is its power, life and significance—that prism with one or several primary colours of the spectrum, through which it contemplates the mystery of the being of all that is. The world outlook is the source and the basis of literature.... To define a people's world outlook is a great task, a gigantic labour worthy of the efforts of the greatest men of genius, the representatives of modern philosophical knowledge; to perform that task means to exhaust the entire life of the people being discussed...."\*

That the world outlook of any given people is the source and the basis of its literature is, of course, indubitable. But the question is whether the life of the people is conditioned by its world outlook or, on the contrary, the world outlook is created by the conditions of its life. Belinsky solves this fundamental question in the idealist sense. He calls the world outlook of the people "a direct revelation of the truth". This is not surprising at all if one takes into account that in 1842 the whole of nature ("the whole world, the whole of life") still seemed to our author to be the realisation of ideas without flesh or blood.\*\* But just how does Belinsky's idealist view of "the substance of the spirit of the people" agree with those of his arguments about the internal history of West-European society which showed us so clearly that the spiritual riches of the West-European peoples are determined by the rich content of their social life ("*rational* struggle" conditioned by the *fact* of conquest)? Of course, one does not at all agree with the other. Reference to the class struggle as a characteristic feature of West-European society is one of the rudiments of the materialist explanation of history that we come across both in the articles of Belinsky himself and in many works by his teacher Hegel. This rudiment remained (and it could not, under the conditions of the time, fail to remain) undeveloped. Therefore Belinsky's clear and consistent view of the internal history of West-European society is complemented by a vague and inconsistent view of the inner development of Russia.

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\* *Works*, Part IV, p. 210.

\*\* Analysis of Nikitenko's "Speech on Criticism", *Works*, Part VI, p. 203.

The mutual struggle of the social classes served as the source of rich spiritual development in the West. There was no such source in Russia, and she therefore had to turn to the West. Thus reasons Belinsky. However, even leaving aside the fact that it would be extremely odd to explain the absence of this precious source by saying that the Russian people was "born" with a different "direct revelation of the truth", one that was unlike the "direct revelation" that fell to the lot of the peoples of the West, one should take into account the following.

To enrich herself by borrowing from Western spiritual riches, Russia apparently had to transfer to her own soil the cause to which these riches owed their origin and growth. Since that cause was the mutual struggle of the social classes, it so appears that Peter's reforms could enrich the "substance of our people's spirit" only if they led to the emergence of such social conditions in this country that result in this beneficent "rational struggle". At the present time Marx's disciples see the significance of Peter the Great's reforms precisely in this. They believe that they strongly accelerated the decay of our old economic relations and thereby gradually turned our economic development in the same direction as had long been taken by the economic development of the West. Did Belinsky see Peter's reforms in this light? No, he did not. True, at the very end of his life, when he finally parted with Hegel's idealism and assimilated Feuerbach's materialism, he expressed the idea that it would be very fine if a bourgeoisie developed in this country, that is, if our economic structure became similar to the West-European one. This idea, however, was not duly developed in his works. It is highly remarkable that the same man (and a man of genius in the full sense of the word) who already in 1841 understood so well the role of the class struggle in the internal history of West-European society, could in 1847 (in a letter to Botkin of March 8) link his ideas about the future of the Russian people with the qualities of the "Russian personality". "The Russian personality," wrote Belinsky, "is still an embryo, but how much breadth and power there are in the nature of this embryo, how oppressive and terrible for it are all one-sidedness and narrow-mindedness. It fears and hates them above all else—and does so rightly, to my mind, being content so far with nothing, rather than enslaving itself to some base one-sidedness."\* A. N. Pypin says that these judgments of Belinsky were taken by some of his friends only as evidence of his inclination "almost to Slavophil idealism". The *almost* is quite out of place here: to pin one's hopes on the qualities of the Russian personality is *precisely* the same as to appeal to the qualities of the Russian people's spirit, to which the Slavophiles appealed so often and so

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\* A. N. Pypin, *Belinsky, His Life and Correspondence*, Ch. IX.

willingly. But the Slavophiles also adhered to historical idealism, they also believed the world outlook of the people to be the main motive force of all historical ... I would have said movement, if the only movement that had any place at all in the historical views of the Slavophiles did not look like immobility—as like as two peas.

## X

In this case, however, Belinsky's views came close not only to the Slavophiles'; they also came close, for example, to Fonvisin's, although in none of his articles did he indicate that aspect of the views of the author of the *Minor* which I have in mind here.

In a letter to Y. I. Bulgakov from Montpellier of January 25 (February 5), 1778 Fonvisin writes:

"I shall not bore you with a description of our voyage, I shall only say that it proved to me the truth of the proverb: *the grass always looks greener on the other side*. Really, intelligent men are rare everywhere. Here they may have begun to live earlier than we did, but we at any rate, in beginning to live, may give ourselves the form that we desire, and avoid those inconveniences and evils which have taken root here. Nous commençons et ils finissent.\* I believe that he who is being born is happier than he who is dying."\*\*

So far as I know, this is the earliest of our "formulas for progress" based on historical idealism and reducible to the hopeful conviction that "we" may give ourselves any "form". The subjective "formula for progress" that later produced such a sensation in Russia is the very same formula, except that algebraic symbols are replaced in it by arithmetic values: the commune, the popular mode of production, etc. The same "formula", *mutatis mutandis*, is to be encountered in Chaadayev, insofar as he was really interested in such calculations, and in Herzen and Chernyshevsky. In each version of this main formula "we" does not mean the popular masses but that part of the population that is assumed to be the leader of the people. This is what Belinsky says, for example, about Peter the Great's historical role: "Before Peter the Great ... Russian poetry, just as Russian life, was only a body, but a body overflowing with organic life, sturdy, sound, powerful, great, quite capable and worthy of being the vessel of an immensely great soul—but a body having no soul and only waiting and searching for it.... Peter breathed a living soul into it—and the heart almost stops beating at the thought of the immensely great destiny awaiting Peter's people...."\*\*\* In Herzen's "formula" the

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\* [We are beginning, and they are finishing.]

\*\* *Works, Letters, etc.*, ed. by Yefremov, pp. 272-73.

\*\*\* *Works*, Part V, p. 159.

role of the body was played by the people again with their communal mode of life, and Peter's role, by the educated nobility, mostly lower and middle, that were recommended to absorb the socialist ideal. With the subjectivists, the nobility were replaced by the *raznochintsi*, etc. The crux of the matter does not lie in these variations but in the fact that in each of them it is not the people that is assumed to be the motive force of historical development but someone well disposed towards the people who chooses one or other "form" for it. To come back to Belinsky, I shall add that his idealist view of the possible course of Russian social development made him contradict himself. See, for instance, how he ridicules the attempts at creating a national Little Russian literature. "As for the Little Russians, it would be ridiculous to suppose that their folk poetry, beautiful though it may be, could now produce something: not only is it unable to produce anything—this poetry itself stopped growing already at the time of Peter the Great; it can only advance if the best and noblest section of the Ukrainian population leaves the French quadrille and goes back to dancing the *gopak* and the *trepak*, exchanges the tail-coat and the frock-coat for the *zhupan* and *svitka*, shaves the head and grows a top-knot, in a word, reverts from the state of civilisation, education and humanity (which the Little Russia owes to its union with Russia) to its former barbarity and ignorance."\*

Belinsky was never at all inclined to look at the people through a veil of genteel prejudices. Here he makes it seem, however, as if the best and the noblest section of the Little Russian population was the nobility wearing tail-coats and frock-coats and dancing the French quadrille.

Six years later Belinsky, in challenging the Slavophiles who reproached our educated minority for betraying popular traditions, wrote this: "The division of the people into a majority and a minority, allegedly antagonistic and hostile to each other, may be correct from the point of view of logic but is decidedly false from the point of view of common sense. The minority always expresses the majority, in a good sense or bad. It is even stranger to ascribe all the bad traits to the majority and the good ones to the minority. The French nation would look fine indeed if men judged it by the dissolute nobility of Louis XV's times! This example shows that the minority is more liable to express the bad rather than the good sides of the people's national character, as it lives an artificial life when it opposes itself to the majority as something separate from it and alien to it. We also see this in contemporary France, in the bourgeoisie—the estate that now dominates there."\*\*

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\* Ibid., pp. 65-66.

\*\* Ibid., Part XI, pp. 44-45.

The division of the people into a majority and a minority antagonistic and hostile to each other is by no means false from the point of view of common sense: it is the necessary premise of the process of class struggle which Belinsky used so aptly to explain to us the spiritual development of the West. And why does the minority always "express" the majority? Did the conquerors "express" the conquered? Did the aristocracy "express" the third estate? Belinsky himself admits that they did not and remarks: "The French nation would look fine indeed if men judged it by the dissolute nobility of Louis XV's times!" And he also insists that the contemporary French bourgeoisie should be regarded as the expression of the bad sides of the French national character. But that means that the division of the people indicated above is quite correct. Whence this vacillation, so unusual in the judgments of our great writer? Belinsky fails to coordinate his view of the development of the West with his view of the development of Russia. And the reason for the failure is, as I have already said, that these views are incompatible with each other: the former constitutes a most important element of the materialist explanation of history, while the latter is entirely permeated with idealism.\*

## XI

I would like the reader to pay attention to the following passages.

In 1844, analysing *The Mysteries of Paris* by Eugène Sue translated by V. Stroyev, Belinsky described the internal state of France at that time as follows:

The aristocracy had declined. The petty bourgeoisie had firmly taken its place inheriting all its privileges, and the proletariat, which had helped the petty bourgeoisie in its struggle with the aristocracy, was left out of things completely. "The eternal worker of the property-owner and the capitalist, the proletarian is entirely in their hands, is entirely their slave, for it is they who give him work and arbitrarily fix the remuneration for it."\*\* The bourgeoisie, replete with food, is becoming more and more dissolute. But the sparks of the good are not yet extinct

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\* Continuing his argument with the Slavophiles, Belinsky says: "Therefore, the source of all progress, of all advance, does not lie in the duality of the peoples but in human nature, just as the latter contains the source of deviations from the truth, of stagnation and immobility" (*Works*, Part XI, p. 46). The position seems to be quite reversed here. It appears, from Belinsky's exposition, that the Slavophiles appeal to "duality", i.e., to the mutual struggle of heterogeneous elements, as the source of all progress, while he turns his back on this source, appealing to human nature. This was the limit of his contradiction with himself, a contradiction which was rooted in the idealist view of history.

\*\* *Works*, Part IX, p. 14.

in France; her position is not yet quite irreparable. She will be saved by the people. "Education is making rapid progress in the people, and it already has its own poets who show its future to it, sharing its sufferings and differing from it neither in dress nor in mode of life. It is still weak, but it alone keeps up the fire of national life and the fresh enthusiasm of conviction that has become extinguished in the 'educated' strata of society. But even now it still has genuine friends: these are men who linked their vows and hopes with its destiny and who voluntarily rejected any participation in the power and money market. Many of them, while enjoying European fame as men of science and letters and possessing all the means for being at the front of the constitutional market, live and work in voluntary and honest poverty. Their conscientious and energetic voice is feared by the sellers, buyers and auctioneers of the administration, and this voice, raised in defence of the poor, deceived people, sounds to the administrative managers like the trumpet on the Day of Doom."\* What is correctly indicated here is the attitude of the "poor people" to its friends, the utopian socialists of that time. The socialists raised their voice in defence of the people, and the people itself was "weak" as yet. But Belinsky says that the people is weak only for the time being: "The people is a child; but the child is growing and gives promise of becoming a man full of power and reason."\*\* In other words, France will be saved by the people whose consciousness is developing fast under the sobering influence of French socio-political relations.

But what about this country? In the article "Thoughts and Remarks on Russian Literature" which appeared in the *Peterburgsky Sbornik* of 1846, our author examined the position of Russia in considerable detail. In his opinion, we must not complain about our destiny, as science is taking root in this country, although it has not yet done so fully, and education is already deeply rooted: "Its leaves are small and few in number, the trunk is neither tall nor thick, but the root is so deep that it cannot be uprooted by any storm, any torrent, any power."\*\*\* We owe our success in education mainly to our literature. Its role in Russia has been enormous and even (let me add an observation of my own) somewhat unexpected. Not only did it create the morals of our society, it also "started the internal rapprochement of the estates, formed a sort of public opinion and created a kind of special class in society which differs from the usual *middle estate* in that it consists not only of merchants and the petty bourgeoisie, but of men of all estates who come to be linked with each other through education, which

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\* Ibid., Part IX, p. 16.

\*\* Ibid., p. 15.

\*\*\* Ibid., Part XII, p. 242.

in this country is concentrated exclusively on love of literature".\*

In France the motive force of progress is the class struggle, and in this country it is literature, which leads to internal rapprochement of the estates. In France, the class struggle leads to the development of the consciousness of the people; in this country the influence of literature leads to the emergence of a special class consisting of men of all estates. Somewhat later Belinsky says that the difference in literary education was carried over into life in this country "and divided people into generations that differed in action, thought and conviction, generations whose living arguments and polemic relationships, proceeding from principles and not from material interests, are features of the spiritual life emerging and developing in society".\*\*

In the West, the struggle of the classes; in Russia, the struggle of principles. In the West, socialism; in Russia, the replacement of one generation by another. The reader will see that these two views are indeed incompatible with each other.

Belinsky, being a man of genius, sensed that there was something wrong here, that this contradiction had to be resolved. He exclaimed: "It is now clear that Russia's inner process of civil development will begin only when the Russian nobility turns into a bourgeoisie. Poland is the best proof of just how strong a state that does not have a bourgeoisie invested with rights is." But that which this man of genius felt, for a long time remained a closed book to the Russian democrats. These men (the Narodniks and the subjectivists) kept repeating a long time afterwards: "God save us from capitalism." Life decreed, however, that Belinsky was right. Russian Marxists became the interpreters of its verdict.

To add a few words. However great and beneficial, in Belinsky's view, the role of enlightenment and literature is in Russia, it is not they that govern her destinies. And Peter the Greats are rare. Besides, the practice of Nicholas' regime was very unfavourable for both literature and enlightenment. Where was the solution to be found? Alas! One had to look for it in the government's good intentions.

Early in 1848, that is, after he had already written his famous letter to Gogol, so full of passionate revolutionary protest, Belinsky in a letter to a friend of his living in Paris criticised very sharply those men who, by their impatient escapades, "irritate the government, make it suspicious and ready to see revolt where none exists, and provoke measures that are drastic and fatal for literature and enlightenment". The matter discussed here was Shev-

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\* Ibid., p. 243.

\*\* Ibid., p. 245.



chenko's famous case. A. N. Pypin remarks that Belinsky was very poorly informed about this case. That is undoubtedly so. But Belinsky's general trend of thought still remains: one should not irritate the government, otherwise it will take measures fatal for enlightenment and literature. But Nicholas' government was so easily irritated that this idea remained unrealisable, so that fatal measures did not cease to threaten literature and enlightenment for a minute. Belinsky could not fail to realise it, and he therefore could not fail to see that his hopes for a better future were based on a very precarious foundation. But he could not find a better foundation for them. In this respect he was very like the great French Enlighteners of the eighteenth century who, in accordance with their historical views, also placed their hopes largely on the growth of education, but they too could not fail to see that education was continually threatened by obstacles caused by the absolute monarchs of the day. Therefore they too tried not to irritate these monarchs, at any rate those who were far away from them (Prussia, Russia) and pretended to sympathise with their teaching. Their belief in the good intentions of these more or less remote monarchs was essentially negligible; and yet they humoured them, believing that something is better than nothing. As I have already shown in my book on *The Monist View of History*, historical idealism in its most widespread variety (that is, subjective historical idealism) opens up to its adherents prospects that are by no means as bright or, which is of the greatest importance, as stable as its defenders believe. Without exaggerating in the slightest, one can say that only men who adhere to historical materialism can be consistent politicians, entirely and consciously.\*

The enlightener links all his hopes with the success of education which is, however, constantly threatened with "drastic and fatal" measures by the obscurantists holding power. It is not surprising that the more impatient of the enlighteners abandon for a while the viewpoint of *subjective* historical idealism and appeal to the *objective* logic of things, attempting to find in the life of the people those elements the very presence of which ensures the future triumph of reason. In the history of our social thought the role of such elements has been played by some archaic forms of our people's mode of life, first and foremost—the village commune. Sympathy with this form is noticeable already among the members of the Petrashevsky circle.<sup>168</sup> Khanykov exclaims: "My native land, where is your communal structure, where are you, the people's

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\* Professor A. I. Nezelenov, who has no inkling of this, ascribes, very stupidly and quite wrongly, the political inconsistency of the great French Enlighteners to their moral indecency whereas in fact it is rooted in their historical idealism. (See his books: «Литературные направления в екатерининскую эпоху» [*Literary Trends in Catherine's Times*] and *N. I. Novikov*.)

freedom, Novgorod the great sovereign?"\* I have already reminded the reader of the great role later ascribed to the commune in the views of the Narodniks and subjectivists à la Mikhailovsky. But perhaps not everyone nowadays remembers that Mikhailovsky himself on several occasions began arguing with the government that the "social question" which has a *revolutionary* significance in the West is a *conservative* question in this country. This was a manifestation of the already familiar and completely inevitable inconsistency of political thought based on historical idealism.

## XII

In his article "A Look at Russian Literature in 1846" Belinsky, arguing with the Slavophiles, says that "we must not stop at recognising the rightness of this or that fact, but must study its causes, in the hope of finding in evil itself the means for escaping from it".\*\* This is a purely dialectical view, quite worthy of the brilliant disciple of the great Hegel. Somewhat later he expresses the same view in different words.

Pointing out that nowadays many Russians go abroad "perfect Europeans" but come back not knowing what they are, and precisely for that reason wish to become Russians, he asks: "What does all this mean? Can the Slavophiles be right that Peter the Great's reforms only deprived us of our national character and made us in-betweens? Can they be right in saying that we have to revert to the social structure and morals either of the times of the Gostomysl<sup>167</sup> of the fairy-tales or of Tsar Alexei Mikhailovich (the choice has not yet been made by Messrs. Slavophiles themselves)?"\*\*\* It goes without saying that he does not think so. "No, it means something quite different, namely, that Russia has completely exhausted and overcome the epoch of transformation, that the reforms have completed their task, have done everything that they could and should do, and that the time has come for Russia to develop originally, from within herself."\*\*\*\*

The word "originally" is used here in the dialectical sense according to which "the result of any phenomenon" (as Belinsky puts it in another place\*\*\*\*\*) "should be looked for in that phenomenon itself". And again, there is nothing at all that one can object to

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\* «Политические процессы николаевской эпохи.—Декабристы.—Тайные общества.—Процессы Колесникова, бр. Критских и Раевских». Изд. В. М. Саблина, Москва, 1907, стр. 22. [*The Political Trials of Nicholas' Times.—The Decembrists.—Secret Societies.—The Trials of Kolesnikov, the Kritsky Brothers and the Rayevsky Brothers.* Ed. by V. M. Sablin, Moscow, 1907, p. 22.]

\*\* *Works*, Part XI, p. 25.

\*\*\* *Ibid.*, pp. 26 and 27.

\*\*\*\* *Ibid.*, p. 27.

\*\*\*\*\* *Ibid.*, Part IX, p. 253.

here. However, what phenomenon has Belinsky in mind? The development of Russia. This development must proceed out of itself, that is, by its own forces. That is again correct. But the question is, what are the motive forces of social development? We know already that in the West, in Belinsky's opinion, the most important of these forces was the class struggle. It determined the development of the spirit of the West-European peoples. Being determined consciousness. What about Russia? Belinsky repeats here that "Russia should not be compared with the old states of Europe, whose history developed in a diametrically opposite direction".\* Assuming that is true, there must still be a certain force stimulating the movement of *our* social life forward. According to Belinsky, this force is the force of Russian nationality, i.e., of the Russian people's spirit.\*\* This is indeed the direct opposite of what is observed in the West: there, being determined consciousness; here, consciousness determines or, at any rate, must in the course of time determine being. But we already know that, in Belinsky's opinion, the Russian people's spirit needs an external impetus for its development, and that the necessary external impetus must come from the West. Where is the transmission mechanism which will help the West to push Russia ahead? In the past the role of that mechanism was played by the government (first of all and above all by Peter the Great), and now and in the future it is and will be played, as Belinsky believes, by that social stratum which he calls the "middle class" and which we now call the intelligentsia.

The view of the intelligentsia as the principal motive force of social development is the view of the enlighteners, pure and simple, based on the fundamental thesis of historical idealism: opinion rules the world. I have not the slightest intention of criticising this view here, but I do believe it necessary to analyse in what direction Belinsky's methods of thinking changed under its influence.

The dialectical view of the class struggle as a rich source of the spiritual development of Western Europe required, as its natural concomitant, some dialectical ideas as to the mode in which the future course of the class struggle will determine the future direction of West-European thought. This requirement was not met at once in the West either. It was fulfilled only by the scientific socialism of Marx and Engels. But there can be no doubt that it was the natural outcome of the above-mentioned purely materialist view of the class struggle as the most profound cause of the entire historical movement of West-European society. But how is one to formulate the principal requirement which proceeded

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\* Ibid., Part XI, p. 29.

\*\* Ibid., pp. 30-31.

logically from Belinsky's subjective idealist view of the development of Russia?

If the intelligentsia (the "middle class") is the main motive force of Russian social development, one must clearly ensure, first of all, that this bearer of enlightenment is itself enlightened in the best possible way. Its enlightenment will be the better, the more correct its conceptions of the social and private lives of men are. Therefore the first task of literature must be the elaboration of correct concepts within the intelligentsia. That is what Belinsky strives for in the final years of his literary activity. In one of my previous articles I called him the father of our enlighteners who played such an outstanding role in the sixties. And this he was, indeed.

### XIII

Already in 1841 Belinsky wrote: "The time of consciousness is coming for Russia. Despite the coldness and the indifference for which we Russians reproach ourselves not without cause, commonplaces and worn-out banalities no longer satisfy us: we prefer to make false and erroneous judgments rather than repeat ready-made propositions accepted on trust or out of laziness and apathy."\* It is noteworthy that Belinsky takes the attitude towards Pushkin as an example to illustrate his idea. Many men, doubting the truth of judgments concerning Pushkin made a long time ago, are beginning to doubt his poetic greatness. In Belinsky's opinion, "this phenomenon is gratifying: it expresses the need for independent thinking, the need for truth, which is before and above all, even above Pushkin. Amicus Plato, sed magis amica veritas\*\*—that is a most wise dictum!\*\*\* One is perforce reminded of D. I. Pisarev with his sensational article "Pushkin and Belinsky". It is a well-known fact that many of those who considered themselves to be Belinsky's admirers were extremely indignant about Pisarev. One would think that Belinsky would have taken pains to cool their ire.

He does not agree at all with people who deny Pushkin's greatness as a poet, but he is not angry with them either.

"Our views are diametrically opposed to those of these men; but, provided their opinion is not the outcome of some external and reprehensible causes, we are ready to argue with them for the sake of the truth and we are convinced that truth will emerge only through such arguments and through them it will enter the common consciousness—it will become a common conviction. We are even less inclined to regard such men as dissenters, as distorters of the truth who insult the memory of the great poet and the

\* *Works*, Part IV, pp. 373-74.

\*\* [Plato is my friend, yet truth is a greater friend.]

\*\*\* *Ibid.*, p. 374.

feeling of national pride. Moreover, we understand that some of those who deny Pushkin's genius may be a thousand times more worthy of respect than many absolute admirers of the great poet's glory who merely repeat the words of others. The appearance of such deniers does not show society's indifference towards truth but rather the nascent love for it, since unconditional recognition of something without discussion, without a test of reason, rather than doubt and denial, is the sign of a society's apathetic indifference to the cause of truth. No, the appearance of such deniers in a young society is a sign of nascent cognitive life."<sup>\*</sup>

One may get the impression that already at that time Belinsky foresaw the appearance of Pisarev with his article against Pushkin and did his best to find beforehand some mitigating circumstances for this enfant terrible of our enlightenment.

But of still greater interest is this fact. In a letter to Botkin on September 8, 1841, our author, while paying tribute to the rather considerable, in his view, artistic merits of a novel by Kudryavtsev,<sup>\*\*</sup> adds that nevertheless he did not like the novel. "I begin to be afraid for myself: a kind of animosity is being born in me against objective creations of art." A. N. Pypin calls this "the Bazarov<sup>163</sup> feature in the forties". It will be useful to note that this "Bazarov" feature, that is, the feature characterising the enlighteners, appeared in Belinsky's views at the time when they were most strongly dominated by the influence of Hegel's dialectics. As he concentrated on the literary struggle against "vile Russian reality", this feature became more profound and more pronounced. And it could not be otherwise. As Belinsky's attention shifted from theory to practice, questions concerning West-European life were increasingly replaced in his field of vision by questions concerning "Russian reality". And we have already seen that in the analysis of the latter he did not remain true to the dialectical method (owing to the terrible backwardness of our social relations) and accepted the viewpoint of subjective historical idealism, i.e., the viewpoint of the enlightener.

Who does not remember Dobrolyubov's articles on Russian literature of the second half of the eighteenth century and particularly on the satire of that epoch? Who could fail to remember what he accused the satirists of those times of and why? It is easy to see that these articles were written under the strong influence of Belinsky and at times look like further development of the ideas that were expressed in passing by the father of our enlighteners. Here is an example.

<sup>\*</sup> Ibid., pp. 374-75.

<sup>\*\*</sup> A. N. Pypin assumes that this is a reference to Kudryavtsev's novel «Цветок» [*The Flower*], published in the ninth issue of *Otechestvenniye Zapiski* for 1841.

In his article "Russian Literature in 1843" Belinsky says: "Formerly satire walked boldly among men in broad daylight and did not even bother about an incognito but called itself directly and openly by its own name, i.e., satire—and no one was angry with it, no one even noticed its face-pulling and pantomimes. Why so? Because no one recognised themselves in it; because it attacked vices in general, which anyone had the right not to take as referring to himself; because it was a book, printed matter, an innocent pupil's exercise in rhetoric..."\*

In the article "Russian Satire of Catherine's Times" Dobrolyubov shows that that satire was a "denunciation, an argument for argument's sake, wit for wit's sake", and that "it was a far cry from the real thing, not only in the satirists' expression but also in their thought".\*\*

Is it not true that both authors develop one and the same idea, only one of them makes a most general statement while the other has in mind a definite epoch?

Belinsky maintains, further, that a man living in society depends on it both in his mode of thinking and in his actions. Earlier satirists failed to understand this, and "that was why these good satirists treated man without paying attention to his education, his attitude towards society, and harassed at their leisure this scarecrow created by their imagination".\*\*\* And what about Dobrolyubov? He writes:

"Most social phenomena cannot be changed by the mere volition of private individuals; one must change the conditions, give different principles for common activity and only then denounce those that are unable to make use of the advantages of the new order. Our satirists partly did not want to understand this and partly, even understanding it, were unable to express it. They attacked ignorance, bribery, hypocrisy, abuse of law, arrogance and cruelty in treating inferiors, base fawning upon superiors, etc. But these denunciations very rarely contained the idea that all these particular phenomena were nothing but the inevitable consequences of the abnormality of the whole social order. The bribe-taker was mostly attacked as if the whole evil of bribery depended entirely on the personal inclination of certain persons for fleecing applicants."\*\*\*\*

Here again Dobrolyubov is only applying to Catherine's times the more general idea that was expressed by Belinsky in connection with the "good satirists" of the good old days.

Even Chernyshevsky seems at times merely to develop Belinsky's ideas and apply them to new cases. Here is a striking example

\* *Works*, Part VIII, p. 62.

\*\* N. A. Dobrolyubov, *Works*, 2nd ed., Vol. I, p. 121.

\*\*\* *Works*, Part VIII, p. 64.

\*\*\*\* N. A. Dobrolyubov, *Works*, Part I, pp. 119-20.

which, so far as I know, has not yet been pointed out by the historians of our literature. In arguing with "Messrs. the defenders of antiquity" who accused Peter the Great of depriving Russia of the opportunity to attain civilisation gradually through her internal development, Belinsky asks:

"Could Russia begin from the beginning, when she had the end already before her eyes? Did she really have to begin, for example, the art of war at the point at which it began in Europe in feudal times, when she was being fired at from guns and mortars and her disorderly crowds could be struck down by orderly ranks armed with bayonets, directed by the command of one man? A stupid ideal! But if Russia had to study military art in the state in which it existed in seventeenth-century Europe, she also had to study mathematics, fortification, the art of artillery and engineering, navigation; and so could she put off studying geometry until arithmetic and algebra were firmly rooted in her and their study was fully and equally successful in all the estates of the people?"\*

The same arguments were used by Chernyshevsky (in his article "A Criticism of Philosophical Prejudices Against Communal Land Tenure") to prove the idea that backward peoples can and must bypass certain stages in economic development.

#### XIV

However, I am not asserting that Chernyshevsky consciously repeated Belinsky's arguments in this case. The fact is that in this article Chernyshevsky applied, if not irreproachably, the dialectical method of Hegel which Belinsky used so often. Both of them had an Hegelian schooling, although it made a deeper impression on Belinsky's views than on Chernyshevsky's. From Hegel both of them proceeded to Feuerbach, and here one must point out the reverse relation: Chernyshevsky stayed in Feuerbach's school longer than Belinsky. It is not surprising in any case that in the works of the latter we often come across ideas that were later developed in detail by Chernyshevsky. These ideas could have been taken from one common source. Still, their similarity is remarkable in the highest degree, and it is strange that even A. N. Pypin did not notice its striking completeness.

Here is another example. Belinsky postulates as a "general law" that "where there is life, there is poetry".\*\* One of the basic theses in Chernyshevsky's dissertation "The Aesthetic Relation of Art to Reality" was the idea that "the beautiful is life". But,

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\* *Works*, Part IV, p. 392.

\*\* *Ibid.*, Part V, p. 83.

as we know, in his aesthetics Chernyshevsky proceeded from Feuerbach's philosophy, whereas Belinsky could hardly have been familiar with Feuerbach at the time when he formulated his general law. He may have deduced it from Hegel's aesthetics, which in general contains very many embryos of materialist views of art. Still, there is no doubt that Chernyshevsky in developing the above thesis had every right to believe himself to be close in spirit to the "critic of the Gogol period". This critic was indeed very close to him as well as to all the enlighteners of the sixties, when he himself abandoned the viewpoint of dialectics and accepted the viewpoint of the enlighteners.

A final example. In one of his really splendid articles about Pushkin Belinsky analyses, among others, the Tatiana's famous answer to Onegin. He is struck by the words:

*I love you (why should I mislead you?),  
But I'm committed to another  
And shall be true to him forever.*

He exclaims: "The last lines are amazing: indeed, 'all's well that ends well'! This answer might be taken as an instance of the classical 'sublime' together with Medea's moi!\* and old Horatio's qu'il mourût!\*\* There is the true pride of feminine virtue! 'But I'm committed to another'—precisely, 'I'm committed', not *I have committed myself!* True forever—to whom and in what? True to relations which are a profanation of feeling and feminine purity, because certain relations, unless they are sanctified by love, are highly immoral.... But with us all of this somehow goes together: poetry and life, love and marriage of convenience, the life of the heart and the rigorous performance of external duties that are internally broken every hour.... True, a woman acts immorally in belonging to two men at the same time, loving one and deceiving the other; there can be no arguing against this truth...", etc.\*\*\*

The enlighteners of the sixties developed these ideas very willingly. The novel *What Is to Be Done?* was, one may say, a more or less artistic illustration of them. Of course, these ideas as well may have been borrowed by the enlighteners of this epoch not only from Belinsky: they were expressed, loud and clear, in Western literature, particularly French, of the forties. But here again, sympathy for identical ideas was bound to strengthen the sympathy of the enlighteners of the sixties for the great "critic of the Gogol period of Russian literature".

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\* [Me!]

\*\* [let him die!]

\*\*\* *Works*, Part VIII, p. 601.



## XV

In a preceding chapter I showed that Belinsky simultaneously adhered to the dialectical view—where the social development of Western Europe was concerned, and to the views of the enlighteners—in those cases where the development of Russia was discussed. I also added that this simultaneous existence of two contradictory views was explained by the incomparably greater development of Western social relations as compared to Russian ones. We must now enlarge on this explanation.

The closer Belinsky came to the end of his literary career, the greater were the changes in the mutual relationship of the two above-mentioned views in his world outlook. Earlier, in the years immediately following his parting with “the philosophical cap of Yegor Fyodorych”, Belinsky was much more a dialectician than an enlightener, while in the later years of his life he was much more of an enlightener than a dialectician. It was only due to this circumstance that he became the father of our enlighteners.

But what are the reasons for this circumstance, so strange at first glance?

The reason is that Belinsky finally abandoned idealism and became a materialist.

This sounds rather strange again: does materialism really exclude dialectics?

Both yes and no: everything depends on the type of materialism we have in mind. The materialism of Marx and Engels is thoroughly imbued with dialectics, while the dialectic element in the materialism of the French eighteenth-century Enlighteners was quite negligible. It was also weak, although not to the same degree as among the French Enlighteners, in Feuerbach's materialist philosophy, and it was this particular philosophy that Belinsky was carried away by when he parted with Hegel's absolute idealism.

In the article “V. G. Belinsky”<sup>169</sup> I quoted some passages to show the complete identity of some views, and basic views at that, held by our critic and Feuerbach. I shall now approach the same question from another side.

P. V. Annenkov bears this testimony: “One may say that nowhere did Feuerbach's book [obviously his *Essence of Christianity*.—G.P.] produce such a stunning impression as in our ‘Westerner’ circle, nowhere did it eliminate so quickly the remnants of the old outlooks that preceded it.” In the same author we find another testimony: “It was for Belinsky, properly speaking, that a translation of a few chapters and the most important passages of Feuerbach's book was made by a friend in St. Petersburg—so he could learn by touch, so to speak, the process of criticism toppling his old mystic and philosophical idols. Should one add that Belinsky was so amazed and stunned that he became quite dumb

before it and lost the ability to raise any questions of his own—which was usually his distinctive feature.”\* This is extremely interesting. But, first of all, how could one completely forget about chronology and not even hint precisely when the passages from Feuerbach were translated for Belinsky, and, second, how is one to understand that Belinsky became dumb before Feuerbach’s philosophy and “lost the ability to raise any questions of his own”? This sounds odd. One may admit that Belinsky, who formerly adhered firmly to idealism, was stunned by Feuerbach’s materialist criticism of the idealist teaching. But that must have taken a short time only: Belinsky must have soon assimilated Feuerbach’s philosophy, and when he did assimilate it, his dumbness disappeared, if dumbness there was, as well as his inability “to raise any questions of his own”, if such inability did in fact exist. Just as Belinsky had formerly approached questions of literature by proceeding ultimately from Hegel’s philosophical idealism, so he now began to approach them by proceeding from the philosophical materialism of Feuerbach. That is all there is to it. But that is enough to exclude both the “dumbness” and the “inability”. Let us try to work out the chronology, using our own judgment.

In a letter to Belinsky of March 10-23, 1842 Botkin says: “The end of the Middle Ages and the beginning of modern times is, properly speaking, the eighteenth century. In France, the negation of the Middle Ages occurred in the sphere of public life; in Byron it manifested itself in poetry; now it occurs in the sphere of religion, represented by Strauss, Feuerbach and Bruno Bauer.” In the same letter Botkin gives a rather detailed exposition of Feuerbach’s view of religion: “In religion, man feels himself to be *dependent*: outside himself he is not free, but subordinate to authority, subject to power, which asserts itself not as his own power but as supernatural and superhuman power.” It is clear from this that early in 1842 Belinsky was familiar not only with Feuerbach but also with Bruno Bauer, and it is remarkable that Botkin, who later disliked the enlighteners intensely, reasons here as an ardent enlightener himself. He writes: “New men with new ideas of marriage, religion, and the state—the fundamentals of human society—are arriving every day; the new spirit, like a mole, runs about and digs unseen underground—a wonderful miner. Das Alte stürzt—es ändert sich die Zeit—und neues Leben steigt aus den Ruinen.”\*\* Besides, in Belinsky’s works belonging to the year 1843 there occur expressions and whole pages which make one suppose that already by that time he was to some extent influenced by Feuerbach.

\* «Литературные воспоминания», СПб., 1909, стр. 284. [*Literary Memoirs*, St. Petersburg, 1909, p. 284.]

\*\* [The old falls—the times are changing—and a new life rises out of the ruins.]

Thus, in the same article about Derzhavin in which he takes the idea as the starting-point of phenomena, that is, expresses himself as a thorough-bred Hegelian, we find a disapproving remark about idealists who, in their one-sidedness, "do not see the organism for the soul", and about materialists who, no less one-sided, "do not see the soul for the mass of the body".\* Our author asserts categorically: "Both empiricism and idealism (abstract idealism) are one-sided and equally remote from the truth; the truth consists in the free reconciliation of both these extremes."\*\* These lines may be deemed as written under the influence of Feuerbach who, while being an undoubted materialist, then liked to represent his philosophy as a synthesis of materialism and idealism eliminating the one-sidedness inherent in each of them.\*\*\* I would not like to vouch for it, as the passage quoted here contains a suspicious reservation about "abstract" idealism. If Belinsky disapproved only of "abstract" idealism, he could conveniently have continued to adhere to the viewpoint of Hegel, who did not favour "abstract" idealism either. But already in 1844, in the article about the works of Prince V. F. Odoevsky, he says with complete conviction that "now even Hegel's philosophy belongs in Germany to the doctrines which have completed their cycle".\*\*\*\* In the following year he repeats the same observation in a short review of A. Tatarinov's book *A Manual for the Study of Theoretical Material Philosophy* (St. Petersburg, 1844). Here again, however, this idea is regrettably not expressed clearly enough for our purposes. He discusses here the "Left wing of Hegelianism", which "fell away from Hegel". In his fear of misleading the reader Belinsky makes this reservation: "When we say that the Left wing fell away from the teacher, that does not mean that it has rejected his great services in the sphere of philosophy and has branded his teaching as an empty and fruitless phenomenon. No, it means only that it wants to go farther and, despite its respect for the great philosopher, it places the authority of the human spirit higher than Hegel's authority."\*\*\*\*\* Does Belinsky count Feuerbach among the Left Hegelians? If he does, the question is solved: these lines show that already by that time Belinsky did not adhere to Hegel's idealism. But Feuerbach did not regard

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\* *Works*, Part VII, p. 67.

\*\* *Ibid.*, p. 68.

\*\*\* See in particular his *Nachgelassene Aphorismen* in the second volume of K. Grün's famous book *Ludwig Feuerbachs Briefwechsel und Nachlass*, Leipzig, 1874. See also: "Wider den Dualismus von Leib und Seele, Fleisch und Geist".... "Wahrheit ist weder der Materialismus noch der Idealismus, weder die Physiologie noch die Psychologie; Wahrheit ist nur die Anthropologie ... u.s.w...." (*Ludwig Feuerbachs Sämmtliche Werke*, Zweites Band, Leipzig, 1846, S. 362.)

\*\*\*\* *Works*, Part IX, p. 63.

\*\*\*\*\* *Ibid.*, Part X, p. 11.

himself as an Hegelian, judging correctly that the basis of his philosophy was directly opposed to the basis of Hegel's system. At the same time there were many idealists within the Left wing of Hegel's school to whom Belinsky's sympathetic opinion could be referred without undue strain. Our author expresses himself more definitely in the article "The General Meaning of the Word 'Literature'". Repeating here the familiar thesis that the literature of any given people expresses its world outlook, and its world outlook is determined by its nature, its temperament, its character—in short, by its substance, he remarks that it is impossible to explain why a certain people has one substance and another people a different one. "True," he says, "the formation of a people's substance is more or less influenced by the geographic, climatic, and historical circumstances; it is obvious, nevertheless, that the first and the main cause of the substance of any people, just as of any man, is a physiological one, the impenetrable mystery of spontaneously creative nature."\* To say that the main cause of the "substance" of both the individual man and the whole people is a purely *physiological* cause is to assert something fully materialist and directly opposite to the view that nature is no more than the realisation of the idea. And we already know that Belinsky expressed this purely idealist idea as late as 1842, in analysing A. Nikitenko's "Speech on Criticism". I regret very much that the *Works* of Belinsky available to me do not indicate even approximately in what year the article "The General Meaning of the Word 'Literature'" was written, which "did not see print". I believe I shall not be mistaken if I date it to 1842. But it seems that it was later supplemented and revised; if it was given the final touches by Belinsky earlier than his analysis of Nikitenko's "Speech on Criticism", this analysis signifies Belinsky's temporary reversal from Feuerbach to Hegel. But it would be more correct to assume that it was written after the analysis and that Belinsky's transition from Hegel's idealism to Feuerbach's materialism occurred in the period of time separating these two works. In any case, in his article "A Look at Russian Literature in 1846" Belinsky shows himself to be a consistent follower of Feuerbach.

## XVI

Lack of space not permitting a detailed consideration of Feuerbach's influence on Belinsky, I shall confine myself to the question, which has been very little studied, of the direction in which Belinsky's view of reality, originally borrowed from Hegel, changed under this influence.

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\* *Works*, Part XII, p. 427.

The current story says there was a time when the wicked Hegel urged the good Belinsky to reconcile himself with reality, but later, with God's help, the "impetuous Vissarion" began to hate the Hegelian "cap" and rebelled against reality. This is true in part: Belinsky did rebel against reality. But there are rebellions and rebellions. Belinsky rebelled against reality in quite a different way from, say, the Romantics, whom he criticised most vehemently precisely at the time when he himself was struggling against reality.

The Romantics turned their backs on reality in the name of the ideal. Belinsky acted in this way himself at the time of his "Fichtean" period; but when he assimilated Hegel's philosophy (and he later believed that his spiritual life began precisely at that time) he came to think that turning one's back on reality meant changing into an empty and piteous illusion. He began to demand a most highly attentive attitude towards reality on the part of the thinker and the artist. Without stopping to consider the time when an attentive attitude towards reality was in his eyes equivalent to a reconciliation with it, I shall point out the epoch when reconciliation was entirely out of the question.

In his article "Russian Literature in 1840" he describes the comedy *The Inspector General*<sup>170</sup> (there is no need to remind the reader that he valued it very highly) as a work "terrifyingly true to reality". In the same article he declares: "There is a time for everything: we are through with the period of self-delusions, childish and adolescent raptures; what we need is reality, not dreams; a copper coin is more precious to us than millions of rubles made out of air—in short, the time of consciousness has come for us."\* A year later he writes: "*Reality*—that is the slogan and the last word of the modern world! Reality in the facts, in the knowledge, in the convictions of the feeling, in the inferences of the mind—in everything and everywhere reality is the first and the last word of this century."\*\* Another year later he describes the last period of our literature thus: "The last period of Russian literature, the prose period, differs sharply from the Romantic one by its virile maturity. If you like, it is not rich in the number of works, but, to make up for that, everything mediocre or commonplace that appeared in it either had no success at all or only a momentary one; and everything that went beyond the commonplace bears the imprint of mature and virile power, it remains forever, and in its triumphant victorious course, gradually gaining influence, it has left a deep impression on society and literature. The drawing closer to life, to reality is the direct cause of the virile maturity of the last period of our literature."\*\*\* In the same article, immediate-

\* *Works*, Part IV, p. 197.

\*\* *Ibid.*, Part VI, p. 195.

\*\*\* *Ibid.*, Part VII, p. 30.

ly afterwards, he develops his view of the ideal. Formerly the word was taken to mean something like this: if you don't like the story don't listen to it, but don't stop me lying. Now "the ideal" is taken to mean neither a lie nor an exaggeration but "a fact of reality such as it is". However, in presenting the fact as it is, the artist does not confine himself to merely copying it but illumines it with the light of general meaning. Therefore in the presentation of a real artist the fact is more true to itself than in a photograph. "Thus, in a portrait painted by a great master a man is a better likeness of himself than of his reflection in a daguerreotype, for the great master with a few sharp strokes reveals everything that is concealed within the man and that may be a mystery to the man himself."\*

He who wants to fight reality has no need to abandon it for the realm of the ideal, as Romantics used to, he must study reality carefully to be able to rely on it in the struggle with it. When man fights nature for his very existence, he does not turn his back on it but masters it using his knowledge of its own laws. The more extensive this knowledge, the greater his power over it. Thus reasons Belinsky. This is a purely Hegelian view of reality. One might assume that in his attitude towards reality Belinsky would remain true to Hegel to the end of his life—true to Hegel the dialectician, of course, not to Hegel as the greatest representative of the absolute trend in philosophy. But that is not so.

In his "Look at Russian Literature in 1846" he says: "Listen and watch carefully: what do our journals discuss mostly?—the national character, reality. What do they attack mostly?—Romanticism, dreaminess, abstractness. Some of these subjects have been much discussed formerly, too, but they had a different sense, a different meaning. The concept of 'reality' is quite new."\*\*

If one remembers that Belinsky's enthusiasm for Hegel began already in the late thirties, it may seem inexplicable that he called the concept of reality entirely new: for him this concept was certainly not new, and since he never ceased to develop it in his articles, it could hardly have been new for readers, too, in 1847. The matter is explained, I believe, by the fact that in speaking of the entirely new concept of reality, Belinsky did not have in mind that conception to which he adhered when he accepted Hegel's viewpoint. "The entirely new concept" of reality now signifies the Feuerbachian conception of it.

In 1842 Feuerbach wrote in his *Vorläufige Thesen zur Reform der Philosophie*: "Philosophy is the study of that *which is*. To think of things and essences, to cognise them *such as they are*—that is the greatest law, the greatest task of philosophy."\*\*\*

\* *Works*, Part VII, p. 31.

\*\* *Ibid.*, Part XI, p. 33.

\*\*\* *Werke*, II, 254.

If you apply this law of philosophy to literature, the result will be this: the greatest task of artistic creative work is to depict phenomena *such as they are*, that is, to *come as close to reality* as one can.

Feuerbach continues: "That which is *seems superficial* if it is described as it is, i.e., in its truth; that which is *seems profound* if it is described not as it is, i.e., *falsely, wrongly*."\*

Reading this, you might think that you are reading one of the brilliant pages in which Belinsky defends the natural school.

But that is not all. Unlike the idealists, who treated the data of our organs of perception with suspicion, Feuerbach asserted that if our conceptions of objects were based on such data, they would be entirely correct. But they are distorted by our fantasy. In Feuerbach's opinion, at first men see things not as they are but "as they appear to us after passing through the prism of fantasy". Only recently, Feuerbach remarks, has mankind begun to revert to the *sensual*, i.e., *undistorted, objective* contemplation of the sensual, i.e., of the real.\*\* The task of philosophy and science in general does not lie in ignoring sensual, i.e., real, objects, but in approaching them through eliminating the fantastic element from our conceptions. To show how close Belinsky's view of the task of literature was to Feuerbach's view of the task of philosophy, I shall remind the reader of our critic's opinion of George Sand's novels: *Isidore, Le Meunier d'Angibault* and *Le Pêché de Monsieur Antoine*. This opinion is to be found in the last annual review of Russian literature written by Belinsky. At that time Belinsky acknowledged the author of these novels to be a writer of genius, without any reservations. But he is not satisfied with these novels: they are fine only in the particulars, but on the whole they are weak; they had failed "because the author wanted to substitute a utopia for existing reality and as a result she made art depict a world that existed only in her imagination. Thus side by side with likely characters and persons familiar to everyone she drew fantastic characters and imaginary persons, so that her novel is mixed up with a fairy-tale, the natural is overshadowed by the unnatural, poetry is mixed up with rhetoric."\*\*\*

Thus we see that Belinsky's entirely new conception of reality is Feuerbach's conception.

## XVII

The following apparently very serious objection may be made here to what I have said. I may be told that Hegel's aesthetics left no place for rhetoric and fantasy, as the subject of poetry

\* Ibid., same page.

\*\* Ibid., pp. 331-32.

\*\*\* Works, Part XI, pp. 357-58.

was, according to Hegel, the same as the subject of philosophy—reality. So Belinsky had no need to proceed from Hegel to Feuerbach to see the true representation of reality as the only task worthy of art.

This objection seems all the more well founded in that, as I showed it above, Belinsky from the beginning to the end of his "spiritual life" demanded unceasingly that the artist give a true representation of reality. Still, that does not prove anything, and we shall presently see why.

In the latter years of his literary activity Belinsky, who condemned all fantasy so strongly, was not, however, satisfied with a true representation of reality—not in poetry, at any rate. He believed that "this truthfulness was the first requirement, the first task of poetry", that one should judge the author's poetic talent proceeding, first of all, from the degree to which this requirement was met and this task solved. But then another requirement is made: "The poet's pictures must contain thought, the impression they produce must affect the reader's mind, it must give a certain direction to his view of the given aspects of life."\* This second requirement corresponds to Feuerbach's demand that philosophy should struggle against men's fantastic concepts in the name of reality, in the name of "that which is". It is entirely in the spirit of "enlightenment". That was how Chernyshevsky understood it. In his *Essays on the Gogol Period of Russian Literature* he said that the new conception of reality had taken shape and gained currency in science only quite recently, only "since the time when the obscure allusions of transcendental philosophy were explained by modern thinkers".\*\* That means this concept was explained by none other than Feuerbach.

Feuerbach's conception of reality grew out of Hegel's conception. But Hegel's conception changed in two respects in Feuerbach's works.

When Hegel speaks of the "rationality" of phenomena, he has in mind, properly speaking, the systematic nature of their development. The great merit of his philosophy was that it considered all phenomena in the process of their development, that is, viewed them from the dialectical standpoint. But Hegel was an idealist. Observing phenomena through an idealist prism, he saw them as a kind of applied logic: the movement of the phenomenon was in the final analysis conditioned by the movement of the absolute idea. Feuerbach broke Hegel's idealist prism; he observed phenomena through the sober eyes of a materialist. That was a great step forward. But in his preoccupation with the struggle against Hegelian idealism, Feuerbach paid too little

\* Ibid., p. 372.

\*\* N. G. Chernyshevsky's *Works*, (ed. by M. N. Chernyshevsky), Vol. II, p. 205.



attention to its dialectical nature. Because of this his own philosophy became thoroughly imbued with the spirit of enlightenment. That was a drawback. But this drawback attracted to his philosophy those men who were inclined towards the viewpoint of the enlighteners. Among them were Belinsky (partially) and Chernyshevsky (entirely).

The dialectician regards men's desires and tastes as the product of the dialectical course of social development. If he recognises given tendencies as "real", not "illusory", he means that they correctly reflect this course of development, which lends them its invincible might. The enlightener approaches the question from quite a different angle. In his view, it is not being that determines consciousness and it is not objective relations that are the criterion of subjective tendencies, but vice versa: the subject pronounces its verdict on objective phenomena from the point of view of its own reason. Dialectical aesthetics is aesthetics which regards art in general and poetry in particular as one of the aspects of the many-sided process of social development; the aesthetics of enlightenment demands that art should pass judgments on the phenomena of life. Belinsky was a dialectician when he said: "The task of true aesthetics is not to decide what art should be, but to define what art is."\* He was an enlightener when, demanding that art should represent reality truthfully, he added that art *must* orient the reader's view of certain aspects of reality.

For a consistent enlightener, the truthful representation of reality is of secondary significance, just as the correctness of diagnosis is for the general practitioner: the general practitioner needs a correct diagnosis to be able to treat the patient, the truthful representation of reality is important for the enlightener as it points out to him where the drawbacks lie that have to be eliminated in the name of reason.

Belinsky himself says: "The highest and the most sacred interest of the society is its own welfare, which embraces all its members equally. The road to this welfare is consciousness, and art may aid consciousness no less than science. Both science and art are equally necessary here, and art cannot replace science nor can science replace art."\*\*

This is undoubtedly true: art does greatly facilitate the development of social consciousness. But it is clear that this perfectly correct idea of Belinsky's was presented by him in a perspective which lent it a strong touch of enlightenment. Belinsky introduced here the category of the necessary, and from this it is but one step to the view of literature as the instrument of spreading a definite system of enlightenment concepts in society. This step was made, as is known, by the people of the sixties.

\* See above.

\*\* *Works*, Part XI, p. 364.

On the contrary, in saying that "aesthetics should not discuss art as something presupposed, as a kind of ideal which can be realised only in accordance with its theory", that "it must consider art as an object which existed long before it and to whose existence it owes its own existence",\* in saying this, i.e., in telling the aesthetic science, "you must eliminate the category of the necessary", Belinsky was adhering to the dialectical viewpoint and was very far from the enlightener's view of art and of the theory of art. Here he is speaking in the language of science, not of publicism.

I do not discuss here which is better: I also reject here the category of the necessary. Everything is good in its own time and its place. But I find that one is quite unlike the other and they can be confused only when there is no clarity in the concepts. And I add: if Belinsky's view of the tasks of art, the view of an enlightener, became so widespread in this country in the sixties, the great scientific task which he set aesthetics has by no means been solved yet in its entirety and may only be solved in the more or less remote future.

## XVIII

P.V. Annenkov, already quoted above, says that "the moral fabric of all Belinsky's thoughts and works was that force which attracted ardent friends and admirers to him". He also believes that an outline of Belinsky's moral preaching, "which lasted all his life would be his real biography".\*\*

That Belinsky's young friends and admirers mostly valued the moral fabric of his preaching is not merely possible but also highly probable. Only if we believe Annenkov in this case will we be able to understand why most people who wrote about him in their memoirs, Annenkov included, show so little genuine understanding of the colossal intellectual work that went on in his head. It may be that Belinsky's young friends and admirers were able to comprehend mainly his moral preaching, but that does not mean that his real biography could be reduced to an outline of his moral preaching. No, we shall only be able to understand Belinsky's life if we take the trouble to comprehend those most important theoretical questions which always attracted this man of genius. And we have not been overly inclined to do so.

But what is most surprising is the fact that even Belinsky's moral preaching was not satisfactorily understood, as we can see, by his young friends and admirers. We may take as an example the same P.V. Annenkov.

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\* See above.

\*\* *Literary Memoirs*, p. 216.

His essay "The Remarkable Decade" describes a controversy in the Westerners' circle in the summer of 1845 on the subject of the attitude towards the people. Some members of the circle accused Belinsky of speaking contemptuously about the people, and Granovsky declared: "In terms of attitude towards the Russian nationality and on many other literary and moral questions my sympathies lie much more with the Slavophiles than with Belinsky, *Otechestvenniye Zapiski* and the 'Westerners'."\*

P. V. Annenkov cannot find a single word in defence of Belinsky. His sympathies in this case are with Granovsky. And his account of this controversy often embarrassed those who wanted to elucidate the views of Belinsky and other Westerners. Mr. Ch. Vetrinsky repeats this account almost verbatim.\*\* Many others do the same.

Let me say more. Even A. N. Pypin had the wrong idea (true, not from Annenkov's account) about Belinsky's attitude to the people.

In a letter to Botkin of December 9, 1842 Belinsky with his customary sharpness says: "I cannot pray for wolves or bears or mad dogs or for Russian merchants and moujiks or Russian judges and policemen, but neither can I feel personal hatred for any of them."

A. N. Pypin tries to find some mitigating circumstances for Belinsky: "The sense of his words is clear from their application," he says; "but it should be noted, as a feature of the times, that the word and the concept of 'the people' did not have then their present-day usage, in which they have become the expression of a whole trend (and behind which even obscurantist hypocrisy often tries to hide). Within the circle of Belinsky and his friends ... this abstract conception had not yet been elaborated."

A. N. Pypin seems not to see that Belinsky's sharp words about "Russian moujiks" are in fact directed only against those traits of the people's character "behind which even obscurantist hypocrisy often tries to hide" and for which Belinsky blamed not the people but its oppressors. Let us recall another letter by the self-same Belinsky published in the book by the self-same A. N. Pypin, of September 8 of the same year 1842. In this letter Belinsky announces: "I have now reached a new extreme, the idea of *socialism*, which has become for me the idea above all ideas, the alpha and omega of faith and knowledge..."

Neither modern scientific socialism nor the utopian socialism of the forties may be accused, it would seem, of a contemptuous attitude towards the people. --

\* Ibid., p. 275.

\*\* «Грановский и его время» [*Granovsky and His Time*], pp. 272-73.

In the same letter the "impetuous Vissarion" exclaims: "Sociality ... that is my slogan.... What matters it to me that the general lives, when the individual suffers? What matters it to me that the genius on earth lives in heaven when the crowd wallows in the mud? What matters it to me that *I* understand the idea, that the world of the idea in art, in religion, in history is open to me, when I cannot share this with all those who must be my brothers in humanity, my brethren in Christ, but who are alien and hostile to me because of their ignorance?... If I give a mite to a soldier, I almost weep; if I give a mite to a beggar-woman, I run away from her, as though I had committed some misdeed, as though I was trying to avoid the sound of my own footsteps. And they call that life...", etc.

And that is the man whom some wanted to inspire with love for the people! Vain efforts: that would be the same as carrying coal to Newcastle.

Can you imagine Belinsky as a serf-owner, reader? I cannot. But Granovsky did have "baptized property". In a letter to his cousin of February 4, 1846, that is, several months after the controversy described by Annenkov, he says that he wanted to sell his estate but could not make up his mind: "I may have need of it. My present position is rather good, but it is not secure in the least; I have the good fortune to have many enemies ... etc."; the question is considered from the point of view of the owner, not from the point of view of the "property".\*

The Slavophiles also never missed an opportunity to lecture Belinsky on love for the people, but they also calmly owned serfs. It is true, some of them (for example, the tax-farmer A. I. Koshelev) remembered that "slavery is a sin", but this view was apparently not generally accepted in the Slavophil circle. The same A. I. Koshelev wrote to I. V. Kireyevsky on October 27, 1852: "I fail to understand, my dear friend Kireyevsky, how is it that you, a Christian, are not tormented by the idea of having people as serfs. During my last stay in Moscow you even made fun of me, considering this idea of mine to be nothing short of monomania."\*\*

A. S. Khomyakov in his turn found that slavery was a sin, and yet Koshelev's diary contains this very interesting note: "March 17, 1851. On Thursday 15 and Friday 16 we spent the evenings, first, at Khomyakov's, and second, at Prince Cherkassky's, and the only talk was about the abolition of serfdom. The main subject of controversy: I demanded unconditional prohibition of selling and buying men between ourselves, Khomyakov insisted on buying with the aim of moving men from guber-

\* Not having Granovsky's correspondence at hand, I quote from Ch. Vetrinsky's book *Granovsky, etc.* The letter quoted here is at pp. 277-78.

\*\* «Биография А. И. Коселева» [*The Biography of A. I. Koshelev*], Vol. II, p. 83.

nias with a shortage of arable land to those with plenty of arable land, Prince Cherkassky was for *sending peasants away as conscripts* for quit-rent estates, that is, he neither buys nor obtains profit thereby, but the peasants are in his name. Cherkassky said that he believed that the end justifies the means."\*

A sin is a sin of course; but what is one to do? We will go to confession in Lent.

Far be it from me to throw stones at the people of the forties, even less at the Westerners of that time, but I shall nevertheless end my article as I began it: we still know very little about the history of the intellectual and, let me add now, moral development of the outstanding figures in our literature and social life....

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\* Ibid., p. 85.

# III

[WORKS  
ON  
A. I. HERZEN]

## A. I. HERZEN AND SERFDOM <sup>171</sup>

[1911]

### I

In issue 94 of the *Kolokol* (for March 15, 1861) A. I. Herzen, profoundly excited in expectation of the Manifesto announcing the abolition of serfdom, expressed the wish that "someone should remember him on the day of the great resurrection of the people". He had certainly deserved remembrance. He ranks high among those of our writers who prepared Russian public opinion for the "great reform". It is therefore quite appropriate to remember him now, on the 50th anniversary of the abolition of feudal bondage.

Herzen's life is clearly divided into two parts. He was born in Moscow on March 25, 1812, and lived in Russia until 1847, first as a "free" citizen and later as an exile and sinner under surveillance. But on January 31, 1847, he crossed the Russian border at Tauragé never to return to his native land. I shall divide my story into two parts in accordance with this division of his life. In the first part I shall show his attitude to serfdom while he was in Russia, and in the second, I shall consider his struggle against it, a struggle in which he wielded his great literary talent as a weapon and made use of English freedom of the press, when he was abroad.

At the time when Herzen was in Russia, the struggle of progressive Russian writers against serfdom was greatly hampered by the extremely rigorous censorship. To describe this aspect of the epoch, suffice it to recall the scene that took place at the Moscow Censorship Committee during censor Snegiryov's report on Gogol's *Dead Souls* late in 1842. The Committee chairman, who was also Deputy Curator of the Moscow Educational District, Herzen's cousin D. P. Golokhvastov, rather frequently mentioned in *My Past and Thoughts*, declared immediately on hearing the title of the book: "No, I shall never allow this: the soul can only be immortal, it cannot be dead; the author is taking up arms against immortality!"

When the speaker explained that "dead souls" should be understood as meaning dead peasants who have not yet been struck

off the official registers, the chairman became even more agitated. Supported unanimously by the esteemed assembly, he shouted: "No, this is even more impermissible, even if the manuscript contained *nothing* inoffensive but these words, 'persons officially registered', this could not be permitted: it would mean opposing serfdom!"

Serfdom was even less open to question than the immortality of the soul. And this is not surprising. Serfdom was at that time one of the mainstays of the social order. Under these circumstances progressive writers could only oppose serfdom in works of fiction inasmuch as they described the dark side of contemporary peasant life. But here as well the censors were on their guard. That is why in discussing the time when Herzen lived in Russia, it will be more appropriate to concentrate not so much on his struggle against serfdom as on those influences which prompted him to join this struggle.

Herzen was the bastard son of a rich and high-born Russian, Ivan Alexeyevich Yakovlev. Being born out of wedlock created certain, at times considerable, inconveniences in his life. Quite probably his seniors' discussions of his "false position" stimulated the child considerably to critical thinking. In Herzen's own words, these discussions instilled in him the conviction that his dependence on his father was less than that of a legitimate child. "I liked this independence, which I invented myself," he admits. I. A. Yakovlev, however, took a great interest in his bastard son's future and, with his extensive connections, was able to provide him with an enviable position among those who enjoyed all the *advantages* of serfdom. What made Herzen into an enemy of this order? What strengthened the love of freedom in the soul of the sensitive child?

He belonged to the generation of Russian people profoundly influenced by an event which was, in general, of immense significance in the history of Russia's internal development. I am referring to the abortive uprising of December 14, 1825. An interesting passage from *My Past and Thoughts* shows most clearly the effect upon him of the news of the uprising in St. Petersburg and its immediate consequences.

"Talk of the insurrection, of the trial, the horror in Moscow made a strong impact on me; a new world was opened up for me, a world that more and more became the focal point of my whole moral existence; I do not know how it happened but, having only little or dim understanding of what the matter was, I felt that I was not on the side where the gunpowder and victories, prisons and chains were. The execution of Pestel and his comrades finally awakened the childish slumber of my soul."\*

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\* *Works*, (Geneva edition), Vol. VI, p. 66.



From whom could the child that had awakened expect support for his freedom-loving aspirations? Who could answer the questions that the "gunpowder and victories, prisons and chains" aroused in him? The answers came from his teachers—the "Russian" and the "French" one.

First the boy turned to the "Russian" teacher, I. Y. Protopopov. The latter was deeply touched by the boy's confessions and, leaving for home after the lesson, he embraced the boy with the words: "Let it be God's will that these sentiments should ripen and strengthen in you." After that he often brought him forbidden poems: Ryleyev's *Thoughts*, Pushkin's *Dagger* and *Ode to Freedom*. In his *My Past and Thoughts* Herzen remarks: "I copied them in secret ... (and now I publish them openly)."\*

Later came the "French" teacher's turn: the "Russian" one must have failed to explain all.

Quite by chance Herzen discovered a history of the French Revolution in his father's basement library. Written by a royalist and extremely biased, it aroused a distrustful attitude in the young reader, but at the same time it engendered in him a desire to discuss the outstanding events of the great epoch with some knowledgeable person. This time his "French" teacher seemed to be the most knowledgeable person. Herzen thus recounts his conversation with him.

"I asked him, halfway through the lesson, 'Why was Louis XVI executed?' The old man looked at me, lowering one brow and raising the other, pushed his spectacles up like a visor, pulled out an enormous blue handkerchief and, wiping his nose, said most importantly: 'Parce qu'il a été traître à la patrie.'\*\*"

As Herzen rightly remarked, a decisive answer like that was worth all the subjonctifs. It finally convinced the young freedom-lover that the French king had been executed rightly.

A comical detail. The old terrorist had disliked Herzen, believing him to be a mischievous good-for-nothing as he never learnt his lessons. He used to say: "You will never come to any good." But after the conversation about Louis XVI's execution his anger turned into benevolence. At the end of the lessons he was unsmiling as ever and had the same air of importance, but now he said condescendingly: "I thought, you know, that you would never come to any good, but your noble sentiments will save you."\*\*\*

\* That is, at the Free Russian Press in London.

\*\* That is, because he was a traitor to his country.

\*\*\* There were many French emigrants in Russia in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. There were both supporters of the ancien régime and revolutionaries among them; both left their mark on the development of their Russian wards. Thus A. I. Koshelev's biographer says that the mother of the Kireyevsky brothers, our well-known Slavophiles, was a pupil of the French emigrant Countess Dorrer, who was, in his words, most aristocratic in her habits and temperament. He remarks that this circumstance had a con-

## II

Why is it that persons who enjoy a certain privilege sometimes rebel against its continued existence? How is this indubitable phenomenon to be explained? Does it not refute the materialist theory that the aspirations of any given social class (or estate) are ultimately determined by its interests?

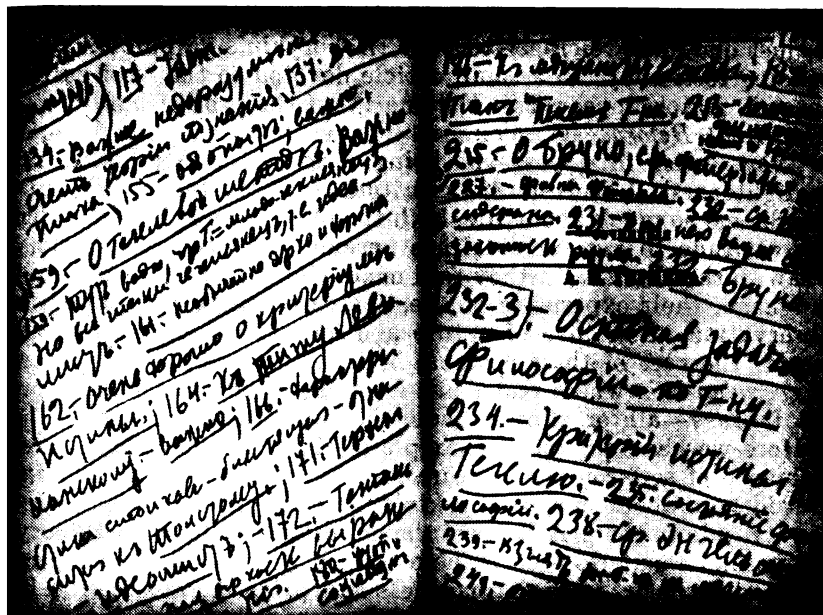
In their famous *Manifesto* Marx and Engels say that in times when the class struggle in its given form is approaching its culmination the process of dissolution affects the entire ruling class, the result being that some elements leave their class and join the oppressed class fighting for its liberation. To prove this, the authors of the *Manifesto* point to the fact that at one time a section of the nobility went over to the bourgeoisie, just as in our day some bourgeois elements are going over to the proletariat. And they are right. If we take into account the irrefutable historical facts which they point out, the situation will appear to be as follows.

The aspirations of the various social classes are determined by their position, i.e., by *their interests*. Since class positions and, consequently, class interests differ from one another, the aspirations motivated by them are also different. When a man belonging to the *ruling* class goes over to the *oppressed* class, he does not thereby prove that he has freed himself from *all class influence in general*, but only that he has freed himself from the influence of *one* class and become subjected to the influence of *another*. This example does not therefore refute historical materialism but only cautions against a narrow and one-sided interpretation of it.

Wherein lies the goal of any serious biography of a public figure who, belonging by birth to the oppressors, goes over to the oppressed? In revealing the circumstances which drew him away from the influence of the oppressors and aroused his sympathy for the oppressed. For instance, I would give much, I confess, for a biography of the aristocratic abbot Sieyès that explained to me the ways in which the influence of the third estate reached him, so that he later wrote the famous words: "What is the third estate? Nothing! What should it be? Everything!" Regrettably, biographers have so far been inattentive to such circumstances.

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siderable effect on her intellectual and moral attitudes (*The Biography of A. I. Koshelev*, Vol. I, Book II, Moscow, 1889, p. 3). We have every right to believe that this circumstance, through the intermediacy of Avdotya Petrovna, was not without influence on the intellectual and moral attitudes of her sons, Ivan and Pyotr Kireyevsky, who were well known for their conservatism. See also В. Лясковский, «Братья Киреевские, жизнь и труды их», СПб, 1899. [V. Lyaskovsky, *The Kireyevsky Brothers, Their Life and Work*, St. Petersburg, 1899.]



G. Plekhanov's comments on the fly-leaf and the title-page of Volume II of A. I. Herzen's Works (Geneva, 1876)

As for A. I. Herzen, we know already something of the influences which developed his love for freedom. We know already what section of these influences should be attributed to his teachers. Now we shall consider the influence of "the ante-room", as he put it, that is, of the domestic serfs.

That the Russian "baptized property" (his own expression) did not fail to exert a certain, more or less useful and many-sided influence on the "noble estate" is not difficult to recognise a priori, and it is furthermore confirmed by a number of generally known facts. Who is not aware, for example, that Pushkin learnt his native Russian from his nanny, a serf, the now famous Arina Rodionovna?

Another example. The author of *Life for the Tsar* and *Ruslan*,<sup>173</sup> M. I. Glinka, says that in his childhood he often heard Russian folk songs in his parents' house. "I was extremely fond of those sad and tender strains which I nonetheless understood quite well," he says, "and, perhaps, these songs that I heard as a child were the first reason why I later worked mainly on Russian folk music."\*

\* Quoted in M. M. Иванов, «История музыкального развития России», СПб., 1910, т. I, стр. 270-271. [M. M. Ivanov, *History of Russia's Musical Development*, St. Petersburg, 1910, Vol. I, pp. 270-71.]

To avoid undue proliferation of examples, I shall restrict myself to just one more reference to P. D. Boborykin's graphic and convincing testimony. In a small article devoted to the "serf enlighteners", which appeared in Volume IV of the jubilee publication *The Great Reform*, he says:

"Now, after fifty years of being a writer, remembering my 'enlighteners', I feel sincere gratitude towards them. Who else taught me so much about life, both the old one and that life when my attitude to my surroundings became more conscious? What I saw in them and what they told me during a whole decade, their language, their experience of life, their extremely fine powers of observation, their love of nature and animals, their view of the world, the cast of their notions, beliefs, rules, the whole poetry of *everyday life*, where real truth is so closely merged with popular fantasy—all of this is their gift and their heritage!"\*

Here we have a graphic example of the extremely many-sided influence of serfs on their future lord and master. True, nothing is said here about how Boborykin's "serf enlighteners" influenced his attitude to the privileges of the nobility. But later on Boborykin speaks about this too. "These men, my serf enlighteners, restrained my heart from the hardness and pride of *class* feeling by simply being attractive for what they were, what they did, what they could do, what they talked about."\*\*

Herzen was also influenced by his "serf enlighteners" in that they destroyed his class prejudice. In general, remembering these "enlighteners", Herzen decisively challenges the nobility's prejudice that the domestic serfs could only corrupt the children of the gentry. "On the contrary," he says, "this 'ante-room' developed in me a bitter hatred for all slavery and all despotism. When I was still a child, if Vera Artamonovna wanted to hurt me badly for some mischief, she used to say to me: 'Just you wait, you will grow up to be like all the other gentlemen.' That was an awful insult to me. The old woman can rest content—at any rate I did not turn out to be *just like all the other gentlemen*."\*\*\*

The prophecy made by Herzen's old nurse, cited here by him, is extremely characteristic. The domestic serfs knew from bitter experience that the psychology of a "*gentleman's child*" is one thing and the psychology of a *grown-up gentleman* quite another. Man is not born a gentleman but becomes one. Much time is needed to teach him to limit his field of vision to the exploiters' interests. It is not so easy for a child to learn this sort of thing. A "*gentleman's child*" is at first simply a social animal, Zoon politicon, as Aristotle puts it. As such, it is quite capable of feeling sympathy for all its neighbours

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\* Op. cit., pp. 84-85.

\*\* Ibid., p. 85.

\*\*\* *Works*, Vol. VI, p. 49.

irrespective of their social position. Only gradually, as it ceases to be a "child", does it learn to see the servant and the master from two different points of view; and when it has learnt to do so, when class prejudice becomes entrenched in its heart, then, in Vera Artamonovna's words, it becomes a gentleman just like all the other gentlemen. But in exceptional epochs, those that are not far from the time of the fall of the given social order, a certain section of the young candidates for the exploiter's role does not conform to this general rule. It consists, of course, of the more sensitive individuals.\* Herzen belonged to their number, and that was the reason why his nanny's dire prophecy, based on bitter experience, did not come true.

### III

Apparently I. A. Yakovlev was not very cruel in his treatment of the serfs. This is acknowledged in A. I. Herzen's *My Past and Thoughts*, and is also confirmed by M. K. Reichel in her memoirs. We learn from her that I. A. was not a tyrant to his serfs, and, if any of his servants was found guilty of a misdemeanour, he lectured the guilty one at great length, but never abused them and, most importantly, never subjected them to corporal punishment.\*\*

Still, the impressionable child, at an early age, noticed much that was very hard for the lord's servants in their subservient position. He was deeply moved, for instance, by the despair of the young men who were sent away to the army.

"These awful scenes struck me forcibly.... Two policemen came at the landowner's summons; they apprehended the chosen man by stealth, as if by chance, taking him unawares; the headman usually announced that on the previous evening the landowner had ordered the man to be sent to the police station, and the man tried to put on a brave front despite the tears, while the women wept and everybody gave him presents, and I, too, gave away

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\* The adjective "sensitive" is used here to denote the ability to feel sympathy for the sufferings of those around one. This ability is not always strongly developed even in very talented individuals. Thus, I. A. Goncharov, for example, could hardly have been endowed with it to any considerable degree. At any rate, judging from his essay "The Servants", one cannot say that he ever had such warm sympathy for the "ante-room" as is evident in Herzen's memoirs.

\*\* «Отрывки из воспоминаний М. К. Рейхель и письма к ней А. И. Герцена», Москва, 1909, стр. 15. [*Excerpts from M. K. Reichel's Memoirs and A. I. Herzen's Letters to Her*, Moscow, 1909, p. 15.] Cf. Herzen's *Works*, Vol. VI, p. 41. Contradicting M. K. Reichel, Herzen says that his father did practise corporal punishment, but it "was so unusual that all the servants talked of it for months afterwards; moreover, it was meted out for grave offences".

everything that I could, that is, a twenty-kopeck piece or a neckerchief.”\*

Another of Herzen's memories is of his father's order to shave off the beard of one of his headmen. This unusual “punishment of the body” greatly distressed the miserable headman: “he burst into sobs and on his bended knees begged to be fined a hundred rubles above his usual rent, only to be spared the infamy.”\*\*

He must have been moved even more strongly by the story, recounted in *My Past and Thoughts*, of the cook who was his uncle's (“the Senator's”) “baptized property”, and the death of Tolochanov, the *serf* physician.

“The Senator” managed to apprentice his cook to the Tsar's cook, a famous Frenchman. Having learnt the trade, he served at an English club, got rich and conceived the desire to buy his freedom. “The Senator” did not consent to sell him his freedom, saying that he would give him his freedom when he, the Senator, died. This upset the poor past master at culinary art so much that he became an inveterate drunkard. Herzen, who had the opportunity to observe the doomed man closely, writes:

“I could see clearly then what concentrated hatred and malice a *serf* harbours against his masters: he spoke with a gnashing of teeth and facial expressions that could be dangerous, particularly in a cook. He was not afraid to speak out in my presence; he liked me and often said, slapping my shoulder in a familiar way: ‘a good shoot of a rotten tree.’—After ‘the Senator's’ death my father immediately set him free; but it was too late, it only meant getting rid of him, he was a lost man.”\*\*\*

The fate of the *serf* physician was even more tragic, if that is possible. He belonged to that same “Senator”. The master took pains to obtain a permission for him to attend lectures at the Medico-surgical Academy. Herzen says that after concluding his studies at the Academy the *serf* physician “practised in a rather slapdash manner”; but he admits that the man had abilities and that he had learnt Latin and German. Afterwards Tolochanov married the daughter of an officer, concealing his position as a *serf*. When the sad truth came out, the wife fled in terror from him with another man. The poor fellow poisoned himself. That was on December 31, 1821. The eleven-year-old Herzen heard Tolochanov's groans and cries: “It hurts! It hurts! The burning!” Someone told the dying man to send for the clergyman, but he refused, saying that he did not believe in an after-life. He died just before midnight, with the words: “Here comes the New Year, Happy New Year everyone!”

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\* *Works*, Vol. VI, p. 41.

\*\* *Ibid.*, pp. 41-42.

\*\*\* *Ibid.*, p. 47.

All these terrible details apparently reached the young Herzen at that very time. Let him narrate how this terrible story affected him.

"In the morning I rushed to the small outbuilding, which served as a bathhouse, where Tolochanov's body was taken; the man was lying on the table just as he was at death, in a dress-coat, tieless, with bare breast; his features were terribly distorted and already black. It was the first dead body that I had ever seen; almost fainting, I went out. Nothing diverted me—neither the toys nor pictures given me on the New Year's Day; the black features of Tolochanov pursued me everywhere, and I kept hearing his 'It hurts! The burning!'"\*

It is just after the story of Tolochanov's death that Herzen remarks ("in conclusion") that the "ante-room" had no corrupting influence on him but, on the contrary, developed in him, from childhood on, bitter hatred for all slavery and all despotism. The examples just quoted show clearly, I believe, the source of this hatred. Its seeds were sown in the soul of the sensitive child by men who themselves suffered severely from despotism and slavery, and, having engendered these noble sentiments in his soul, provided a unique stimulus for his later moral development.

Note that Herzen was by no means inclined to idealise the "ante-room". He says that training the servants' children "to serve" meant training them to be idle, lazy, to tell lies and drink cheap vodka.\*\* Still, he admits, as we have seen, that it is precisely to the serfs of the "ante-room" that he owes his hatred for all oppression of man by man. How so? The answer is quite simple.

While the "ante-room" trained a man to drink vodka, to tell lies and idle about, it did not train him—at any rate, not at the time of Herzen's childhood and adolescence—to reconcile himself to his subservient position.\*\*\* And that means that the answer provided by the "ante-room" to the problem of relationships between people was immeasurably more moral than the one that could be obtained in the master's study or the drawing-room. Only the young shoots of a rotten tree that did not forget the answer provided by the serfs' "ante-room", only these could become progressive workers at the time in Russia.

So far the history of our literature has been insufficiently considered from the view point of *social psychology*. And the latter,

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\* Ibid., pp. 48-49.

\*\* Ibid., p. 42.

\*\*\* That is not always the case. Travellers report that in some parts of Africa slaves look down on mercenaries, believing their own position to be more honourable. This always happens at those stages in social development when slavery, as "an organisation of labour", corresponds to the state of the social productive forces. In Herzen's epoch there was no such correspondence in our country any more.

in its turn, has been insufficiently studied from the view point of *the mutual relations and mutual influence of the social classes*. But the few facts that we know about the subject fully confirm what I have said about the role of the serfs' "ante-room" in the moral development of those representatives of the "negative" trend in our social thought who came from the nobility.

Let me point out Lermontov as an example. Mr. Nestor Kotlyarevsky says: "Lermontov spent thirteen years in the country—not only his childhood but adolescence as well. He could observe the peasants' everyday life at first hand and he lived, they say, in rather close contact with the simple people."\*

Was it not this close contact that sowed in his soul the *first* seeds of the "negative" mood which later developed—or should we say *almost developed*—in such an original fashion in that soul?

I believe this to be quite probable.

However that may be as far as Lermontov was concerned, there can be no doubt in respect of Herzen.\*\* He himself says, as we know, that his hatred for slavery and despotism was instilled in him by the servants. And, if that is so, contacts with the servants clearly made him for the first time capable of responding to the appeal for freedom, they made him susceptible to such influences as that of December 14, to Ryleyev's and Pushkin's forbidden poems and, finally, the terroristic doctrines of the "French" teacher: he certainly came in contact with his nanny Vera Artamonovna before he heard of December 14 or attended classes given by Monsieur Bouchot, a terrorist from Metz. And that means that, by arousing his hatred for all slavery and despotism, the servants made a very strong impact on his subsequent political development without in the least suspecting it.

#### IV

"Solitude among beasts is harmful to me," Herzen wrote in his diary on June 10, 1842. This kind of solitude is harmful to anyone. We do not know what form his hatred for slavery and despotism would have taken, the hatred whose seeds were first sown in his soul by the servants, had he been destined to stand alone with his freedom-loving aspirations. Like Lermontov, who was also by no means averse to freedom-loving aspirations in his youth, but whose sad fate was, apparently, one of spir-

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\* Н. Котляревский, «Лермонтов», СПб., 1909, стр. 18. [N. Kotlyarevsky, *Lermontov*, St. Petersburg, 1909, p. 18.]

\*\* Ch. Vetrinsky remarks that because of his birth out of wedlock the servants viewed Herzen only as a half-and-half master (*Herzen*, St. Petersburg, 1908, p. 7). It is quite possible that the circumstances of his birth made for closer contacts with the servants.



itual solitude, like Lermontov he might have failed to go beyond the proud but fruitless contempt for the "common herd".

To make my thought clear, I shall quote an example borrowed from Herzen himself. In his own words, bubbling over with "Bouchotist terrorism", he once took it into his head to prove to one of his playmates the justice of Louis XVI's execution. "That is all very fine, but he was one of the Lord's Anointed, wasn't he," the listener objected. "I looked at him with pity, stopped liking him and never asked to be taken to their place again."\* That is understandable. Imagine for a while, however, that all the playmates to whom the young Herzen decided to reveal his extreme views turned out to be like that one: what would have happened? He would have looked at all of them with pity; he would have stopped liking all of them, and although he would not have stopped seeing them, perhaps, he would certainly not have attempted to bare his soul to them. In other words, he would have become *aloof*, that is, precisely the kind of person Lermontov remained to the end of his life. And that is not all. Taking a contemptuous view of his playmates, he would grow accustomed to seeing himself as the chosen one, unappreciated and misunderstood by the "herd", again precisely how Lermontov saw himself. And that is still not all. The freedom-loving aspirations of the impressionable youth, finding no response in those surrounding him, would have caused him to take a gloomy view of the future. Who does not remember Lermontov's famous poem, "Meditation"?

*With deep distress I contemplate our generation!  
Its future stretches on to darkness, emptiness.  
Knowing too much, lost in equivocation,  
It grows towards old age in idleness.  
For we are rich, from infancy or almost,  
In all our fathers' faults, their hindsight and their wit,  
And life, like a smooth road without a goal, has dulled us  
Like guests who at an alien banquet sit.*

If the lives of Herzen, Belinsky and other men of the forties did not become a smooth road without a goal, if they escaped Lermontovian disillusionment, this is explained largely by fortunate contingencies that saved them from "solitude among beasts".\*\* They were saved by the sympathy which they found in

\* *Works*, Vol. VI, p. 90.

\*\* There can be no doubt now that Lermontov, in his youth, strongly aspired to freedom. Mr. N. Kotlyarevsky says: "There are many notes and verses in his youthful notebooks where he touches on contemporary political events. His views of these events are extremely liberal and even very bold, for those times. There is the daring escapade against Arakcheyev 'the tyrant' ('Novgorod', 1830), the exceedingly disrespectful satire on kings ('Asmodeus' Feast', 1830) and the obscure prediction of a black year for Russia, nothing short of a repetition of Pugachev's revolt" ("Prediction",

circles that shared their views. I shall not dwell on the significance of Herzen's friendship with N. P. Ogarev in their adolescence. I shall only recall here the famous oath sworn by the young friends during a walk on the Sparrow Hills.

"The sun was setting, the cupolas were shining, the city spread into a boundless distance at the foot of the hill, a fresh breeze was blowing; we stood there for some time arm in arm, and then, all of a sudden, embracing each other, in sight of all Moscow, we vowed to sacrifice our lives to the struggle of our choosing."\*

This scene, so romantic in appearance, may cause some readers to smile. If one takes into account, however, that the Sparrow Hills became a sort of Mecca for the two participants in that scene where they went several times a year, "always alone", it will become clear that it left a deep impression upon them.

Herzen says: "Nothing in the world keeps adolescence as clean and noble, nothing preserves it as well as a strongly excited interest in the whole of humanity."\*\* That is undoubtedly so. But one may add that nothing in the world helps to maintain the adolescent's interest in the whole of humanity as well as the ability to share it.

At the university, a friendly circle soon formed around Herzen and Ogarev—the famous Herzen and Ogarev circle that played such an important role in the history of Russia's intellectual development. It comprised N. I. Sazonov, N. M. Satin, V. Passek, N. Kh. Ketcher, Maslov, Lakhtin, Noskov, and A. N. Savich, later well known as an astronomer.

At the university Herzen was surrounded by very fine young men, to quote his own words. They took a lively interest in science and at the same time did not close their eyes to the life of society around them. Herzen remarks that this "sympathy with the life of society" greatly stimulated the students' civic morality. "We and our friends said anything we liked in the lecture-halls; notebooks with *forbidden* poems changed hands, forbidden books were read and commented upon, but, for all that, I can-

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1830); all of this may well be immature and superficial, but it is quite obvious that Lermontov began thinking along these lines quite early, so that some of his later poems, suspected to be of liberal tendencies, were not, as we see, a caprice, but the product of intense thinking. The young poet's notebooks also contain two poems devoted to the July revolution, both of them full of enthusiasm and radical spirit but rather poor in execution. There is also a poem, very clever and beautiful, a greeting to a bard who has been exiled from his native country—evidently not for his love for the Muses" (op. cit., pp. 47-48). All of this is significant enough; but Lermontov's political aspirations remained undeveloped and later appear to have subsided entirely. The tenor of his poetry is mainly the individual revolt of a proud and independent personality against the philistine social environment.

\* *Works*, Vol. VI, p. 93.

\*\* *Ibid.*, p. 91.

not recall a single instance of anyone informing on his fellow students, a single case of treachery. There were timid young men who tried to keep aloof, not to get involved, but they too kept their counsel."\*

To comprehend Herzen's view of Russia, the view that was formed later but was, of course, closely linked with memories of youth, it will be useful to note here the following circumstance.

In his words, social differences had no influence on mutual relations between students at that time. A student who took it into his head to boast of his noble parentage or his wealth would have been "refused 'water and fire', and tormented by his comrades". Still, they were mostly young men of the *nobility*. The medical department, where Germans and seminary graduates predominated, kept aloof from the rest of the student world. "The Germans," Herzen says, "kept themselves to themselves and were utterly imbued with the Western philistine spirit. The entire upbringing of the poor seminary graduates, all their notions were quite different from ours; we spoke different languages; having grown up under the yoke of the monks' despotism, cowed by their rhetoric and theology, they envied us our free-and-easy ways, while we felt annoyed at their Christian humbleness."\*\*

Leaving the Germans aside, let us recall that in the sixties the students who had come from seminaries, far from displaying "Christian humbleness", constituted, one might say, the vanguard of the student body. Students from the *raznochintsi* partly went far ahead of the students from the nobility and partly subjected the latter to their influence. This change in the proportion of the *raznochintsi* was reflected in the history of social ideas in Russia. When the Narodniks of the seventies insisted that the intelligentsia would organise the most responsive elements from the peasantry and undertake, together with them, the realisation of the "Land and Freedom" ideals, they had in mind *the intellectuals from the raznochintsi*. When Herzen, early in the fifties, said that our intelligentsia would introduce the people to the latest (socialist) conclusions of West-European thought, he meant *the intellectuals from the nobility*. Thus, in his work *Du développement des idées révolutionnaires en Russie* (Paris, 1851, p. 84) he says outright that "in our country the work of revolutionary thinking was done not in the government nor in the people but in the lower and middle nobility". He says the same thing on other occasions.

Later I shall consider this aspect of his views in detail; now I would like to point out merely the extent to which the history

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\* *Works*, Vol. VI, p. 138.

\*\* *Ibid.*, p. 127.

of his intellectual development confirms the correctness of the materialist thesis that it is not thinking that determines being, but, on the contrary, being that determines thinking

## V

The Herzen-Ogarev circle was a "political" one, as distinct from the no less famous circle of Stankevich that was *philosophically* oriented.<sup>175</sup> The "philosophers" looked rather superciliously at the "politicians", whom they suspected to be lacking in thoroughness.\* Nevertheless the "philosophers", to the same extent as the "politicians", deserve Herzen's remark that the young men at the university, for all their interest for theoretical problems, did not close their eyes to problems of practical life. We learn from K. S. Aksakov, who was a member of Stankevich's circle, that the circle "had already elaborated a general view of Russia, of life, of literature, and of the world", and that view (mark this!) was "mostly negative".\*\* If that was the case with the "philosophers", the negative view must have been all the more dominant among the "politicians".

The "politicians" were indefatigable propagandists. Herzen writes: "Where there was a chance for conversion or preaching, we went in soul and mind, persistently, never letting go, never grudging time, labour or even playacting...."

What was it that they advocated, actually? To answer this question, I prefer to quote directly from Herzen again.

"It would be difficult to say exactly what we advocated. Our ideology was vague: we advocated the French Revolution, then Saint-Simonism and again the Revolution; we advocated the constitution and the republic, the reading of political books and concentration of forces within one society. But, above all, we advocated hatred for any oppression, any despotism."

In studying Saint-Simon's teaching, Russia's progressive young men came to know, for the first time, West-European socialism. Herzen says that Saint-Simonism formed the basis of his convictions (he even uses a more comprehensive expression, "the

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\* Herzen narrates: "Before the exile, there was not much love lost between our circle and that of Stankevich. They did not like our almost exclusively political orientation, while we disliked their almost exclusively speculative one. They regarded us as Frondeurs and Frenchmen, while we viewed them as sentimentalists and Germans. The first man to be recognised by both sides, the one who extended a friendly hand to both, who, through his warm love for both and by his very conciliatory nature, erased the last vestiges of mutual misunderstanding, was Granovsky (*Works*, Vol. VII, Foreign edition, p. 120).

\*\* К. С. Аксаков, «Воспоминания студенчества 1832-1835 годов», СПб., 1911, стр. 17. [K. S. Aksakov, *Memories from the Student Years (1832-35)*, St. Petersburg, 1911, p. 17.]

basis of *our* convictions") "and remained unchanged in the essentials".\* Here again he is quite right. He did indeed remain a socialist to his dying day. He who forgets this will never understand Herzen's publicistic work at the time of the abolition of serfdom. To the end of his life Herzen persisted in an error that was characteristic not only of Saint-Simon's teaching but of utopian socialism in general. I mean *the inability of this type of socialism to make head or tail of the relation between being and consciousness, economics and politics*. The reader may think that I wish to utter a paradox if I add that this weakness of the views of Herzen *the socialist* explains, in a certain measure, the *widespread* influence of the *Kolokol* in the first few years of its existence. But that is really so. I shall later explain the matter more fully.\*\* Now I shall note only this.

One of the most fundamental and most fruitful ideas in Saint-Simon's system is the thesis that "dans tout pays la loi fondamentale est celle qui établit la propriété et les dispositions pour la faire respecter".\*\*\* Understood correctly, this extremely important idea prompts the conclusion that the legal relations and political system of any given country are determined by its economics. That is a purely materialist idea. Saint-Simon not only formulated this idea, he also made it the basis of many extremely profound arguments concerning the development of European civilisation in modern times. He argued that production is the goal of social union and consequently such a union will always be headed by men controlling production. Up to the fifteenth century agriculture was the most important branch of production and it was controlled by the nobility. That was why the nobles wielded political power. But by and by, as industry developed, a new social class emerged and had to be reckoned with as a significant historical force—the industrialists in the proper sense of the word. This class grappled with the nobles and gradually took over almost all of their positions in economics. In its quest for allies in this struggle, it formed an alliance with the monarchy, and this circumstance explains the entire subsequent development of the French monarchy up to the time of Louis XIV, when the monarchy turned away from the industrial class and became allied with the nobility. Saint-Simon believed this to be a great political mistake and persistently urged the Bourbons to rectify their

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\* *Works*, Vol. VII, p. 197.

\*\* See also my article "Herzen in Emigration" which appeared in No. 13 of *A History of Nineteenth-Century Russian Literature*, edited by D. N. Ovsyaniko-Kulikovsky, Mir Publishers, p. 150.

\*\*\* Saint-Simon being unavailable to me. I quote from P. Louis, *Histoire du socialisme français*, Paris, 1901, p. 66, i.e., "in each country the fundamental law is the one that establishes property and takes measures for it to be respected".

error as soon as possible, that is, to break up their alliance with the aristocracy, which was harmful both for themselves and the whole of France, and to take the side of the "industrial class".

Needless to say, the Bourbons remained deaf to his advice. It will not be irrelevant, however, to point out a theoretical mistake characteristic of both Saint-Simon and all the other utopian socialists. The mistake is that, in speaking of *the past*, Saint-Simon regards political power (and, consequently, the activity of its representatives in each given period) as an *effect* necessarily produced by a *cause*, i.e., by the economic relations of the given time. However, when dealing with *the present* and *the future*, the same writer regards the same power as an independent social force which may, at its own discretion, become the champion of the interests of any social class. In his attitude to the past Saint-Simon is a materialist; in his attitude to the present and the future he is a pure-blooded idealist. He is indebted to materialism for his profound philosophical and historical reasoning, much of which was borrowed by Augustin Thierry and Auguste Comte, whereas idealism is responsible for his political programme, which was more than once changed in its particulars but always retained its naively utopian character.

In view of all this, A. I. Herzen's words, quoted above, that Saint-Simonism formed the basis of his convictions and "remained unchanged in its essentials", are particularly instructive. We shall soon see that Herzen in his capacity as a publicist repeated the mistake of Saint-Simon and other utopian socialists: he also placed too many hopes on the good will of the representatives of political power; he also forgot, in this capacity, that the limits of what is possible for any given administration are determined by the nature of the economic relations out of which it grows.

In a sense, he was even more prone to make this mistake than the West-European utopian socialists. At any rate, there were fewer obstacles in his theoretical views to making it.

The point here is this.

Saint-Simon and his disciples were not the only proponents, in West-European literature, of the view that the internal development of European society was determined by the struggle between the "industrial class" and the aristocracy. During the Restoration already, this view was assimilated by all the outstanding French historians and later on, by Russian writers. But the latter modified or, if you wish, complemented it in a very original fashion. They admitted that West-European society was indeed moulded by class struggle, but at the same time they believed that this struggle played no role whatever in Russia's internal development. This dualistic and contradictory philosophy of history was most diligently elaborated by M. P. Pogodin and the

Slavophiles, properly speaking, but it was by no means rejected by the Westerners either. Belinsky adhered to it, and so did Herzen. Each of these two brilliant authors, who argued so hotly with the Slavophiles and mocked them so acrimoniously, was ready to repeat after Pogodin that Russia was not the West and that Russian society was not formed by the mutual struggle of the classes but (at any rate, since Peter I's times) by the civilising agency of the government.\* It should be clear to anyone that this philosophy of Russian history necessarily predisposed Herzen to overestimate greatly the opportunities that the supreme power had for abolishing serfdom, as well as for other reforms, of course.

We should be completely dumbfounded by some relevant, now almost improbable, hopes of Herzen *the publicist*, if we failed to take into account these weak points of Herzen *the theoretician*.

From the *practical* viewpoint, of considerable importance for Herzen and his circle was Saint-Simon's idea that all "social institutions must have as their goal the moral, intellectual and physical improvement of the most numerous and poor estate".

Speaking of Saint-Simon's system, N. P. Ogarev later referred to this idea as the principal practical conclusion from the teaching of the famous French socialist.\*\* Everyone who knows Herzen's and Ogarev's literary activities will agree that, indeed, they never lost sight of that idea.

## VI

Let us not anticipate the future, however. In the small hours of July 20, 1834,<sup>176</sup> Herzen was arrested and in April of the following year sent into exile. That was the beginning of Herzen's first term in exile which ended in March 1840. His second

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\* For details see my article "M. P. Pogodin and Class Struggle" (*Sovr. Mir*, 1911, March and April). Our Westerners regarded Russia's historical development as proceeding differently from social development in the West. They most frequently explained the difference by referring to the absence of class struggle in Russia; they were later very sympathetic to Kavelin's idea of the generic nature of Russian history as opposed to the individualistic nature of Western history. Belinsky called this idea a stroke of genius (*Belinsky, His Life and Correspondence*, 1876 ed., Vol. II, p. 248).

\*\* See Ogarev's article in the *Kolokol* (No. 223): "Private Letters on General Subjects", Letter IV.—In this extremely interesting article Ogarev points out, as the main idea in Saint-Simon's system, the thesis that the future is a function of the past, and insists that this "simple idea ... *cannot fail to lead* [italics mine.—G. P.] to the need for a social reconstruction in which the class of parasites with means ... and the class of workers without means must merge into one common human productive force...." One must admit that this "*cannot fail to lead*" has no sufficient logical basis. The thesis that the future is a function of the past is applicable to all epochs in social development, but it was only the nineteenth century that witnessed the emergence of the tendency for organising workers "into one common productive force" referred to by Ogarev.

exile began in July 1841, when he went to Novgorod and settled on the bank of the Volkhov, "right opposite the cliff from which the twelfth-century Voltairians pitched Perun's<sup>177</sup> miracle-working statue into the river".\* Let us see how living in a provincial town affected his attitude towards serfdom.

Herzen spent the period of his first exile in Perm, Vyatka and Vladimir-on-Klyazma. During his sojourn in Vladimir his time was fully taken up by important private matters—his relationship with Natalya Alexandrovna Zakharyina, whom he married on May 10, 1838. Early in the same year (on January 5) he wrote to her in Moscow: "Now I am all yours: there are no real people, and I do not need these. I have said goodbye to all my friends. Just as I said goodbye to my dreams of glory, a career, activity. All my life is in you. It's all over. I have been seeking for the great and I have found it in you, I have been seeking for the holy, for the ideal—and I have found it in you. So—goodbye to the whole world."\*\* Later, after their marriage, the exclusiveness of this attitude was weakened. In *My Past and Thoughts* Herzen writes: "Our breast was not locked by happiness, but, on the contrary, it was opened to all interests—more than ever; we lived more fully then and in all directions, we did much thinking and reading, we gave ourselves to all things and then concentrated on our love; we compared our thoughts and dreams and were surprised to see how infinitely far our sympathy went, and that there was something kindred and harmonious in all the finest and infinitesimally small turns and ramifications of our emotions and thoughts, tastes and antipathies."\*\*\* But this passage in itself shows that his attention was still focussed on his private emotions and relations. It is not surprising that the description of these relations and emotions takes up almost all of the chapters from *My Past and Thoughts* that describe Herzen's life in Vladimir-on-Klyazma. As for Perm, where he stayed for

\* *Works*, Vol. VII, p. 195. In conversation with Benkendorf, then Chief of the Gendarmes, before his second exile Herzen remarked: "In 1835 I was exiled in connection with some celebrations at which I was not even present! Now I am punished for a rumour that is bandied by the entire city. A strange destiny!" (*Ibid.*, p. 179). A strange one indeed! The first time Herzen and Ogarev were arrested on a charge of taking part in celebrations where forbidden songs were sung. The celebrations coincided with old man Yakovlev's birthday, which both Herzen and Ogarev spent in his house. The second time Herzen was exiled for communicating in a letter to his father the rumour about a watchman murdering an inhabitant of St. Petersburg. The letter was, of course, opened and inspected. In answering the question of how Herzen and Ogarev could be arrested in connection with something in which they did not participate, P. V. Annenkov says: "That is explained by the lengthy nature of political trials and their ability to involve, for completeness' sake, contiguous spheres and ideas" (*Literary Memoirs*, St. Petersburg, 1909, p. 73). A profound truth and a bitter one!

\*\* Vetrinsky, *Herzen*, p. 74.

\*\*\* *Works*, Vol. VII, pp. 89-90.



a short time only, and Vyatka, these do not have landowners, so serfdom was little known there. During his exile in those parts Herzen mainly encountered manifestations of *bureaucratic* despotism. We have an incomparable description, in *My Past and Thoughts*, of this despotism, which oppressed, of course, most mercilessly that class of which a section suffered under the yoke of the landowners' power, i.e., the peasantry. Let me remind the reader, for instance, of Herzen's account of the "potato riots" of peasants who refused to plant frozen potatoes in their fields (as ordered by the authorities). It came to shooting; the peasants fled into the woods; the Cossacks<sup>1</sup> chased them from the woods like wild animals and took them to Kozmodemyansk for trial....

"...Well, the trial proceeded in the usual Russian fashion: the moujiks were birched at interrogations, by way of punishment, to intimidate others and to obtain money, and large numbers were exiled to Siberia...."\*

Extremely noteworthy also is the humorous account of Devlet-Kildejev, a police superintendent and a "devout Mohammedan", who converted the pagan Cheremis to Orthodox Christianity by force. According to Herzen, the equi-apostolic Tartar received the Vladimir Cross for his endeavours, causing considerable embarrassment among his Tartar fellow Mohammedans. Herzen adds:

"Later I read an account of this remarkable conversion of the Cheremis in the journal of the Ministry of the Interior. The article mentioned Devlet-Kildejev's zealous co-operation. Unfortunately it failed to add that his zeal for the church was all the more altruistic, the firmer he believed in Islam."\*\*

Since the exiled Herzen was, by Imperial decree, marked for civil service, he had, willy-nilly, to make a close study of the manifestations of bureaucratic concern for the people's welfare. He writes that not long before the end of his stay in Vyatka the Department of State Properties was so corrupt that committee of enquiry had to be appointed, which sent inspectors to the various provinces. The Governor of Vyatka, Kornilov, had to appoint two officials to help this investigation, and Herzen happened to be one of them. "The things I had to read there—sad, ridiculous, and vile things! The very titles of the cases astounded me. 'The case of the disappearance *no one knows where* of the volost council building and of the gnawing up of the plan thereof by mice.'—'The case of the loss of *twenty-two* state tax items', i.e., about fifteen versts of land.—'The case of the reinstatement of the peasant boy Vasily in the feminine sex'."\*\*\* This last case was due to a mis-

\* *Works*, Vol. VI, p. 331.

\*\* *Ibid.*, p. 325.

\*\*\* *Ibid.*, Vol. VI, p. 325.

take by a tipsy clergyman who christened a girl as a boy, naming her Vasily instead of Vasilisa. Her father approached the relevant authorities with a request for an explanation of the perplexing situation: would the girl have to pay poll-tax and serve as a conscript. Herzen did not know how this curious case, which went on for years, ended, but he suspected that "the girl was probably left under the cloud of suspicion of being masculine". He remembers, apropos of this, a colonel in Emperor Paul's time mistakenly listing a sick officer as dead. By an Imperial decree the sick man was struck off the rota, but, unfortunately for him got well and filed a request to be re-entered on the list of the living. Paul's decision was: "Request refused as said officer's status was defined by an Imperial decree." Herzen finds, not unjustly, that this is even better than the Vasily-Vasilisa case.

One need hardly say that the conclusions Herzen drew from his observations of provincial life were not of the most comforting kind. For the sake of accuracy, however, I shall quote his remark in *My Past and Thoughts* in connection with the conversion of pagans to Christianity by a Mohammedan. He believes that this conversion is typical of all the reforms undertaken by our bureaucracy: "façade, stage scenery, blague,\* falsehood, a pompous report, someone steals and someone is birched."\*\*

In other words, it turned out that the concept of "serfdom" was much broader than that of the "serf peasants' dependence on the landowners". Herzen was, of course, aware of this before, but that which had earlier been based on more or less abstract reasoning now carried the full force of immediate observation.

During his second exile Herzen served as counsellor on the provincial administration and headed its second department. In this capacity he dealt with three types of cases: persons under police surveillance, religious dissenters and abuse of power by landowners. Since he was under surveillance himself, he had the control of *his own case*. "It is hard to imagine anything more absurd or stupid; I am sure that three-quarters of my readers will not believe it, and yet it is the real truth."\*\*\* It is easy to see that the Herzen under surveillance did not make too much trouble for Herzen the official. As for the dissenters, our counsellor, having looked through their cases, left them alone since, in his view, it would be in the interests of the persecuted not to raise the issue. To make up for that, he was all the more zealous in dealing with cases of abuse of power by landowners.

"Whole martyrologies of horrible crimes are buried in the servants' rooms, the maids' rooms, in villages and police torture

\* [jokes]

\*\* Ibid., p. 323.

\*\*\* Ibid., Vol. VII, p. 199.

rooms; the memory of these crimes ferments in the soul and, through generations, is coming to a head—to bloody and ruthless revenge, which is *easy to forestall*, but will hardly be possible to stop.”\*

Herzen did what he could to defend the miserable serfs. He takes pleasure in recounting, for instance, that he was able to bring to trial one Strugovshchikov, a retired naval officer, who had indulged, unpunished, in “all sorts of atrocities” on his estate for a long time. The naval officer lost the case, became enraged and promised to thrash him. But, being unaccustomed to campaigns on land, as Herzen surmises, he failed to carry out the threat.

These pleasures, however, were not frequent or lasting. Civil service was becoming less and less bearable for the exiled counsellor of the Novgorod provincial administration. The reason for that was not so much his subservient position as the fact that, in becoming a link in the bureaucratic machine, he assumed a moral responsibility before his conscience for the evil that that machine wrought on the people. The last drop that made the cup overflow was the following case.

Musin-Pushkin, a Novgorod landowner, had a peasant and his wife deported to Siberia. This couple had a ten-year-old son, whom the landowner decided to keep. Arriving at the office one day, Herzen saw the peasant woman who was to be deported: she had come to plead for her son. She knelt before him crying and asked him to intercede on her behalf. As she was telling him of her plight, the governor entered, and Herzen communicated her plea to him. The governor announced that by law the landowner was entitled to keep children who were over ten if their parents were deported. The poor mother, who could not understand the inhuman law, went on crying, clinging to the feet of the implacable head of the province. He grew impatient with this and shouted, roughly pushing her away: “Stupid woman! Don’t you understand plain Russian—I can’t do anything, so leave me alone!” Thereupon with resolute step he went to his office.

“I went too ... I had had enough.... Hadn’t that woman taken me *for one of them*? It was time to put an end to the comedy making.

“‘Are you unwell?’ inquired counsellor Khlopin, who had been transferred from Siberia for some transgression. ‘I am sick,’ I answered, then got up, took a bow and left. On that same day I submitted in a report pleading illness, and I have not set foot in the provincial administration building since.”\*\*

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\* *Works*, Vol. VII, p. 208.

\*\* *Ibid.*, p. 213.

## VII

On April 3, 1842, Herzen asked permission to resign "on account of illness". His request was granted, and he was even given the rank of court counsellor on resignation; but at the same time Benkendorf advised the governor that it was forbidden for Herzen to leave Novgorod. It was only in July of that year that he was allowed to move to Moscow, permission to go to St. Petersburg still withheld.

The Odyssey of the exile was over, Herzen was "free" again. He was eager to act. The only field of action that was open to him in Russia at the time was literature. Already in 1843 *Otechestvenniye Zapiski* published his well-known articles: "Dilettantism in Science", followed by *Letters Concerning the Study of Nature*, the novel *Who Is To Blame?*, the story *Doctor Krupov*, *Letters from Avenue Marigny* and another story, *Magpie the Thief*, to say nothing of smaller articles and witty polemics with the *Moskvityanin*. Some of these works appeared in print when he was already abroad, while others (*Letters from Avenue Marigny*) were written in foreign parts; but all of them belong to the period of his activities immediately preceding this decision never to return to Russia. Almost all of them are very important for the history of the development of Russian social thought.\* Regrettably I can touch here only on that which concerns serfdom, and only briefly, at that.

As was mentioned earlier, this question, under the censorship conditions then prevailing, was partially open to fiction writers only. That is why I shall only deal with Herzen's works of fiction.\*\*

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\* Of special importance for this history is the second *Letter Concerning the Study of Nature*, where Herzen, following Hegel, develops the remarkable thesis that "to prove" an object means to reveal its necessity, and that "the idea of an object is not the subject's exclusive property: he does not think it into reality, he only realises it; it has pre-existed as latent reason in the object's immediate being". On the role of this thesis for the development of Herzen's own views see my article on Herzen mentioned above, p. 141 of the same issue of *A History of Russian Literature*.<sup>178</sup>

\*\* Some reproached Herzen for the obscurity of his philosophical articles. Trying to vindicate himself jokingly against this reproach, he said: "Vissarion Grigoryevich enjoys our fairy-tales much more than our treatises, and right he is, too. In our treatises we continually masquerade against censorship and bow courteously before every gendarme of the lowest rank, whereas in fairy-tales we walk in all our pride and cut everyone, carrying in our pocket orders to whomsoever it may concern to let us go unhindered, and give us food and lodging" (P. V. Annenkov, *Literary Memoirs*, pp. 288-89). Even masquerading, however, did not always save his treatises from censorship. He writes, in his letter to Kireyevsky, that for fear of the censors he did not dare expound the philosophical views of Spinoza: "That Jew was pure poison, really."

Herzen as a fiction writer was, understandably, most strongly influenced by Gogol. Mr. A. Veselovsky remarks quite correctly that his novel *Who Is To Blame?* in its descriptive device and humorous appraisal of men and their everyday life was just as closely linked with *Dead Souls* as were, afterwards, Shchedrin's *Provincial Sketches*.<sup>\*</sup> But, whereas Gogol views serfdom as a kind of immutable and even beneficent law of nature (see his *Selected Passages from a Correspondence with Friends*), Herzen hates this order with all his being. This essential difference in their attitude to the institution that was at the time the foundation of the landowners' entire life is clearly revealed in the work of both these writers. In ridiculing, with the force of a genius, his Sobakeviches, Korobochkas, Nozdrevs, and Manilovs,<sup>179</sup> Gogol portrays or, at any rate, would have liked to portray their inherent defects and vices as causally unconnected with their mode of life based on serfdom. Herzen's works present quite a different picture. Much weaker than Gogol as far as artistic creativity goes, he reveals an incomparably greater insight. Having carefully read the novel *Who Is to Blame?*, you see clearly that the views and habits of General Negrov's family, so caustically ridiculed by the author, sprang precisely from the way of life made possible by serfdom; you see no less clearly that it was serfdom that poisoned the bloom of life for Lyubonka, the General's "ward". Herzen knows that an observant and shrewd enemy, the censor, is watching every stroke of his pen. He expresses himself cautiously. But his indignation, tempered with caution, makes his ridicule all the more fine and therefore more biting. Let me remind the reader, to begin with, of General Negrov's rustic occupations. On settling down in the country, His Excellency "scolded his bailiff and the headman every day, hunted hares and roamed the fields with a shotgun. Unaccustomed to performing any duties whatsoever, he could not comprehend what had to be done, toyed with trifles and was content. The bailiff and the headman, for their part, were also content to have such a landowner; I do not know about the peasants: they were silent. A month or two later a beautiful woman's face appeared at the windows of the manor, the eyes, at first, swollen with weeping, but later merely lovely and blue."<sup>\*\*</sup>

These lovely blue eyes belonged to the daughter of Yemelka Barbash, a serf. To complete the picture, it remains to be added that even these wearisome occupations were soon abandoned by our rustic gentleman: "He convinced himself that he had remedied all the defects on the estate and, which was more important still, had put the estate on such a firm footing that it could run with-

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<sup>\*</sup> A. Веселовский, «Герцен — писатель». Очерк, Москва, 1909, стр. 47. [A. Veselovsky, *Herzen as a Writer*. An Essay, Moscow, 1909, p. 47.]

<sup>\*\*</sup> *Works*, Vol. III, pp. 18-19.

out him, and he decided to go back to Moscow.”\* But here humour still prevails over indignation. Besides, these *motifs* are not infrequent in Gogol either. In the story of Sofia Nemchinova, a serf governess, who later became the wife of landowner Beltov and mother of one of the principal characters in the novel *Who Is to Blame?*, Vladimir Beltov, humour gives way to burning indignation, which finds expression in Sofia’s letter to her persecutor. In general, Herzen was evidently extremely preoccupied with the tragic destinies of those belonging to the serf intelligentsia. A representative of this species is the heroine of the story *Maggie the Thief*, a talented actress who fell victim to the attentions of Count Skalinsky.\*\* Belinsky found that the story savoured of the anecdote, although it was written in a masterly fashion and produces a deep impression. But it narrates a true episode, and the question is bound to arise: what verdict does the order deserve which makes possible anecdotes like the one told by Herzen?

An even darker picture of serfdom is drawn in the story *Duty Above All*, the first part of which Herzen sent to St. Petersburg from abroad early in 1848. He says that he wanted to present the main protagonist of this story, Anatoly Stolygin, as a man full of vigour, energy and ability, who leads, however, an empty, false and tedious life due to a permanent contradiction between his aspirations and his duties. The title of the story, *Duty Above All*, also indicates the author’s intention (the story remained unfinished). The plan of the story as outlined by Herzen shows that the duty, the requirements of which poisoned the hero’s life, was none other than the sum total of requirements imposed by the order based on serfdom—in the broad sense of the word—on its privileged defenders. This story thus extends the problem of serfdom to the dimensions of a political problem. The censorship did not allow it to be published, and it appeared abroad in the collection *Interrupted Stories* (1854). Herzen explains the censor’s severity with regard to the story by the fact that there was a very strong attack of censorship sickness at that time:

“Over and above the common civil censorship, a military one was set up consisting of adjutant-generals, lieutenant-generals, commissary generals, engineers, artillerymen, chiefs-of-staff, officers of His Majesty’s retinue, platz- and bau-aides-de-camp, a Tartar prince and two Orthodox monks under the chairmanship of the Naval Minister.”\*\*\*

This witty description of the notorious censorship supercommittee is hardly justified as an explanation of why the story

\* Ibid., p. 19.

\*\* This story appeared in the February issue of the *Souremennik* for 1848, that is, when Herzen was already abroad.

\*\*\* *Works*, Vol. IV, p. 69.

*Duty Above All* could not appear. Regular censorship would have been quite enough to forbid it. In characterising Herzen as a fiction writer, Belinsky made the extremely acute observation that "he depicts crimes which are unaccountable to law and which are taken to be reasonable and moral acts by most".\* And it is quite natural that a story which described as a crime that which appeared completely lawful and just from the point of view of the order then prevailing should seem criminal to the defenders of that order. The story *Duty Above All* was very offensive in this particular respect, and that was why it was not published in Russia.

### VIII

On October 9, 1843, Herzen entered these lines in his diary: "...We Slavs have to be silent—or speak outside our motherland, as Mickiewicz said."\*\*

The same diary contains an entry dated January 24-25 of the next year: "Terror. A terrible cloud is gathering over the heads of men who have left the crowd. What a terrible thought: absolutely innocent men without a direct practical goal, belonging to no association, may be destroyed, crushed, executed for a certain way of thinking.... The opponents of the ideal of expatriation advise me to go while the going is good."

It is clear, then, that the idea of expatriation, that is, emigrating abroad, came into Herzen's head as early as the end of 1843. For several years he considered "expatriation" only as an unpleasant possibility. Even when he went abroad in January 1847, he still had no intention of making this possibility a reality. But two years later the decision to stay abroad matured. The first chapter of his much-talked-of book *From Another Shore* bore a significant title: "Farewell".\*\*\*

Addressing himself to his friends in Russia, he says there: "Our separation will last long, perhaps forever. I do not want to return now, and I do not know if it will be possible later." Later—very shortly afterwards—it became impossible. In the autumn of 1850 the Russian government through its consul in Nice demanded his immediate return home, making it known beforehand that it would on no account agree to a postponement. In view of this impatience, he was, in his turn, convinced that he should on no account return home. Thus he became an emigrant. He said afterwards that he would have preferred exile in Siberia to his position of an emigrant. But in Siberia the same all-Russia censorship would hang over him, whereas living abroad guaran-

\* V. Belinsky, *Works*, Part XI, Moscow, 1884, p. 390.

\*\* *Works*, Vol. 1, p. 140.

\*\*\* This chapter is marked March 1, 1849.

teed him freedom of speech. And that changed the complexion of things essentially.

In the chapter from the book *From Another Shore* which I have just quoted he wrote: "I stay here not only because it is repugnant to me to be put in the stocks again on crossing the border: I stay here to work. One can live twiddling one's thumbs anywhere; here I have no other task but *our* task.... I am more useful here, here I am your uncensored speech, your free organ, your accidental representative."

Thus, when he was faced with a choice between silence and speech outside his Motherland, he chose free speech.

If we take into account that Belinsky was already in his grave by then, we shall have to agree that no man was better equipped to be the "free organ" of progressive Russian people than Herzen. And, as we know, Herzen performed this role to perfection.

Now we shall see how he fought serfdom while living abroad. To understand his activities fully, however, it will be appropriate to sum up his view of the Russian people. After all that has been said above there is hardly any need to prove that all his sympathy was with the people. However, here is an extremely convincing extract from his diary (dated July 9, 1844):

"What do they [i.e., the people.—*G. P.*] need to wake up from pitiful apathy? Their eyes sparkle with intelligence; in general, out of ten moujiks, eight are nobody's fools and five are positively clever, quick and knowledgeable; they are much slandered on the moral count, they are sly and ready to swindle, but that only happens when they set themselves against us. And it cannot be otherwise, we rob them openly and on lawful grounds, the forces are not equal...."\*

This quotation would have been a superfluous repetition of something that the reader knows already, if it did not reveal a new aspect of our author's view of peasantry. His heartfelt sympathy is with the peasant, he believes in the peasant's intellectual and moral qualities, but he considers him to be in a state of pitiful apathy. *This* aspect of Herzen's view explains much of his subsequent literary activity abroad. It had to be pointed out here. Anyone who assumed that the relevant words of the above quotation express a casual and accidental shade of Herzen's view would be very much mistaken. This shade is by no means casual or accidental. In April of the same year, having set down in his diary the story of peasant rebellion in a volost of the Tambov Gubernia, he adds: "All the peasants in this volost are *Molokans*, a girl singing psalms was walking at the head. So, these sounds are heard from the small and

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\* *Works*, Vol. 1, p. 211.



secluded monasteries of the dissenters, amidst the general muteness of the peasants."\*

The sounds of which Herzen speaks here, that is, the peasant rebellions, were not limited to schismatic circles. But, due to the undoubted muteness of our press, they remained unknown even to the progressive people of the epoch. Naturally, the disturbances of the kind of which Herzen speaks in his diary are by no means evidence of the ability of peasants to take independent social and political action. Later, our Narodniks, the "rebels" of the seventies, made a major mistake in setting all their hopes on such disturbances. Life soon "disappointed" them on this score. However that may be, it is important for a description of the views of Herzen and his associates at the time that the peasantry seemed to them even more "mute" and apathetic than it really was. In other words, *Herzen and his associates, with all their sympathy for the people, regarded them (and had to regard them) as still completely incapable of active defence of their interests.* All that remained was to set one's hopes on the future. And Herzen did precisely that.

It is interesting to note that Herzen liked Gogol's *Dead Souls* because, in his opinion, it was a bitter but not hopeless reproach against Russia. In his words, Gogol sees a daring nationality full of vitality where his eye penetrates the mist of dung fumes.

"The Chichikov world is sad, for we are sad in reality; the only consolation both here and there is in one's faith and hopes for the future. This faith, however, cannot be denied, it is no mere romantic hope ins Blaue,\*\* it has a realistic basis; somehow blood circulates well in a Russian breast. I often look out of the window at the barge haulers, especially on a holiday when, having had a drop or two too much, with tambourines and singing, they sail in a boat shouting, whistling, and raising hell. A German would not even dream of this sort of razzle-dazzle; and then, when the storm comes—what daring, what courage, just rushing headlong, come what may. Child, I would like to see you when you become a youth, but I won't live to see the day; I will give you my blessing from my grave."\*\*\*

This belief in the future of the Russian people did not always protect him from depression which at times came close to despair. We read in his diary, in an entry dated April 21, 1843:

"Our position is hopeless because it is false, because historical logic indicates that we are outside the people's needs and our plight is one of desperate suffering."\*\*\*\*

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\* Ibid., p. 193.

\*\* [into the blue]

\*\*\* Ibid., Vol. I, p. 18.

\*\*\*\* Ibid., p. 98.

But on the whole he takes a predominantly hopeful view of the future of Russia.\* And that view is supported by faith in the future of the West-European world. He writes: "When one thinks that hardly 75 years have passed since Europe was in its sleep of humiliation, from which it was awakened with some difficulty by the ringing bells of the founders of the new world, when one looks at its present state, far from perfection and yet developed by necessity, one's soul trembles involuntarily with reverence and respect for the humanity. The French Revolution is great; it was the first to announce to the world, to the astounded peoples and kings that a new world had been born and that the old one had no future."\*\*

We shall see presently that he soon acquired an almost hopeless view of Western Europe. He needed his faith in Russia all the more then, but even then he never revealed hope in independent action by peasantry. As for the period before he went abroad, which is our exclusive interest here, his lack of faith in the people's independent action is very well expressed in the following passage from his diary:

"Someone must wake up—either the government or the people. It is hard to believe that either the former or the latter will...."

These lines were written on December 24, 1843, and on March 24, 1844, Herzen says: "So far it has only been possible to talk to the people through Holy Writ." Let us remember that.

## IX

While abroad, Herzen witnessed the revolutionary movement of 1848-49, and, as is usually maintained was disappointed at the failure of this movement. There is a certain inaccuracy here which should be corrected.

In the July 1, 1867 issue of the *Kolokol*, Herzen asks Bakunin: "Do you remember our long talks before the February Revolution, when I, as a prosecutor, pointed to the oncoming death of the 'old man' of the West, and you, with hope and expectation, to the growth of the budding life of the Slavic minor. Actually,

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\* This faith in the future is even a sort of categorical imperative with him. He reasons thus: "Chaadayev made the very fine remark once that one of the greatest traits about the Christian world view is the concept" (there must be a misprint here, it should be *podnyatiye* ["raising"], not *ponyatiye* ["concept"]).—G. P.) "of hope to a virtue and its juxtaposition with faith and love. I quite agree with him. This hoping amidst misfortune, this firm hope in a seemingly hopeless situation is almost exclusively our lot. A belief in the future of one's people is a condition for the realisation of that future" (Vol. I, p. 179).

\*\* *Diary*, July 27, 1843. *Works*, Vol. I, pp. 130-31.

I did not believe in him either, *but I did believe in Russia alone and in her social beginnings.*"

As you see, in his attitude to Western Europe Herzen, the very Herzen whose belief in Russia was maintained by a belief in the force of the progress of all humanity, looked very much like a disappointed man even "*before the February Revolution*". We cannot therefore say that Herzen became disappointed *only* under the impact of the failure of that revolution. On the contrary, it is quite fair to assume that its failure would not have made him disappointed had he not been disappointed to a considerable degree even before it.\*

However that may be, there is no doubt that when Herzen made up his mind to stay in Western Europe for a long time he was profoundly disappointed in it. As this disappointment determined the subsequent development of his views, it should be dealt with in some detail.

When Herzen in his talks with Bakunin even "before the February Revolution" "pointed to the oncoming death of the old man of the West", he was undoubtedly repeating, with more or less important reservations, the Slavophil idea that "the West" was existing on borrowed time. When this idea later became his firm conviction owing to the unfortunate experience of the February Revolution, it assumed the following form.

The role of contemporary Europe had been played out to the end. From 1848 onwards its decline increased steadily. The West could only be saved from decline by the worker. But "the worker might be defeated, and if he is defeated, the decline of old Europe will become inevitable". Sometimes Herzen began to think that the "worker" had *already* been finally defeated and that the decline of Western Europe was therefore *already* inevitable; at other times, on the contrary, the hope revived in him, more or less strongly, that the "worker's" cause in the West was not quite lost, and he began to believe again in the possibility of its progressive development. This hope was revived with the emergence of the International Working Men's Association. If Herzen had been fated to see the further successes of the West-European working-class movement, he would quite possibly have abandoned his gloomy view of the internal state of Europe. Unfortunately, his untimely death (he died, as we know, on January 21, 1870) made that impossible. Therefore those of our contemporaries who, even in present-day Europe, see nothing but "philistinism" (failing to see the mountain for the mole-hill, in a manner of speaking) would appear to have a certain right to refer to Her-

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\* On this point see the article "Herzen in Emigration" in Issue 13 of *A History of Nineteenth-Century Russian Literature*, Mir Publishers, ed. by D. N. Ovsyaniko-Kulikovsky.

zen. But in fact the attitude of these ... sceptics has nothing in common with Herzen's attitude. He believed that only the triumph of the working-class movement could save the West from philistine domination, whereas our sceptics of today believe the contemporary working-class movement to be one of the most striking manifestations of philistinism. Clearly there is no kinship between them and Herzen; clearly they take Herzen's illustrious name in vain.

But let us leave them alone. We see that in discussing the possible destinies of the West Herzen takes the point of view of the *class struggle: if the working class wins*, Western Europe will rise again to a new life; *if it does not*, it will fall into total decline. This attempt to determine the further course of the internal development of a given society by adopting the standpoint of the class struggle going on within it brings Herzen's approach close to that of the supporters of modern scientific socialism. But one should not exaggerate this closeness. It is with considerable reluctance that Herzen links his hopes for the future triumph of socialism in Western Europe with the class struggle. The solution of the "social question" through the class struggle seemed to him the worst way of solving it. The utopian nature of the kind of socialism to which, generally speaking, our great publicist adhered revealed itself perhaps most strongly in his aversion for the class struggle.\* The events of 1848-49 disappointed him largely because they were a manifestation of the class struggle in West-European society. As this struggle was a more or less reliable means of solving the great problem of the relationship between labour and capital, it impressed him as bitter mockery of the power of that very reason of which he regarded West-European socialism as the last word. In his view, the only way of solving the "social question" that conformed to the requirements of reason was that in which the initiative in social transformation was taken by enlightened and unbiased representatives of the ruling class. Of all the lessons that West-European life taught him the hardest one was that the educated representatives of the ruling class in the West had no wish whatever to embark upon the realisation of the socialist ideal (and could have no such wish). That is why his confidence in the fact that the destiny of West-European society depended on the victory (or defeat) of the working class went hand in hand with a most cheerless view of West-European life. Having arrived at that confidence, he went on being disappointed, firstly because, as was indicated above, he regarded the class struggle in general as the most unsatisfactory way of solving social problems, and secondly, because he thought

\* It will be indicated later, however, that Herzen sensed the weakness of some aspects of utopian socialism and that this influenced his view of the "old man" of the West.

the chances of the proletariat winning were extremely negligible.\*

One may perhaps say that in this respect, too, he remained a Saint-Simonist. Indeed, on November 29, 1831, the Saint-Simonist (at the time) *Globe* wrote: "Les classes inférieures ne peuvent s'élever qu'autant que les classes supérieures leur tendent la main. C'est de ces dernières que doit venir l'initiative" (The lower classes can only rise insofar as the upper classes give them a hand. It is from the latter that the initiative must come). Herzen, too, must have thought this, and so did all the utopian socialists. We cannot say therefore that he was especially close to the Saint-Simonists in this case. But this in no way weakens the correctness of the fact that Herzen's disappointment in Western Europe was caused by the unwillingness of the upper classes of West-European society to take the initiative in social transformation.

Herzen was very fond of comparing the attitude of the European West to socialism with the attitude of the Roman Empire to Christianity. Rome produced the Christian ideal, but could not realise it: that was done by other peoples. It seemed probable to Herzen that, having elaborated the socialist ideal, Western Europe would be unable to translate it into reality and that Russia would be called upon to do this. It will be appropriate to note that the French socialists of the time were generally inclined to see many points of similarity between that of the position of contemporary European society and Rome at the time of the emergence of Christianity.\*\* Herzen merely complemented this comparison with an hypothesis that could only occur to a Russian. It is noteworthy that even Herzen's terminology is often a variation of the terminology of contemporary French socialists. For example, his well-known reply to Michelet bears the title: "The Old World and Russia." This brings to mind Considérant's book, which had appeared a few years before and which I have

\* Here are his own words: "As long as it was a question of political rights, all educated men were on the side of the movement, when it came to the social question, there was another splitting. Some men remained true to logic and the movement, but a lot of educated ones retreated and found themselves—with all their habit of opposition—on the side of the conservatives. The people, whose petitioner the former revolutionary became, again fell back into the hands of the priests or, worse even, remained helpless in the darkness of the base spheres of life. Its advocates, who had concealed from view its infantile backwardness, stepped aside, and we saw several prophets on high and the slumbering masses of people below. One was afraid to move forward, and it was impossible to go back, the faith in the past having been lost; one had to bide one's time, be on good terms with everybody, keep a hold on things that one did or did not need, defend one's gains, push away the new. Under these conditions, the simple despotism of the empire, that is, of the autocratic police, is more natural than the constitutional monarchy" ("Letters to a Traveller". Letter VI, *Kolokol*, No. 203).

\*\* See, e.g., Victor Considérant, *Le socialisme devant le vieux monde ou le vivant devant les morts*, Paris, 1848, p. 25.

just mentioned, *Socialism Before the Old World or the Living Before the Dead*. The only difference is that *Considérant* meant by the old world the world of the defenders of the old social order whereas Herzen uses the term to denote the whole of Western Europe.

## X

The stronger Herzen's disappointment in Western Europe was, the greater the moral significance of his faith in Russia became. Earlier this faith itself had been maintained, as we know, by a belief in the revolutionary forces of the West. This faith in the West has now disappeared, whereas his faith in Russia has become all the stronger. This appears to be a paradox: how could his faith in Russia grow stronger after the foundation on which it was once based had been destroyed? This puzzle is explained by the peculiarity of Herzen's socialist views just mentioned.

I have said that according to the fundamental practical meaning of these views the only way of solving the social question that conformed to the requirements of reason was that in which the initiative in social transformation was taken by enlightened representatives of the ruling class. Representatives of this class in the West did not rise to the occasion during the 1848-49 revolution, whereas in Russia they seemed to be ready to do so. I have already quoted the passage from Herzen's brochure *Du développement des idées révolutionnaires en Russie* which says that the work of revolutionary thinking in our country was done not in the government nor in the people but in the lower and middle nobility. Herzen said the same thing on other occasions as well. Thus, in a speech delivered on February 27, 1854,<sup>180</sup> in London, at an international meeting to honour the memory of the February Revolution, he characterised contemporary Russia in these words: "You will see there two embryos of movement, one from above, the other from below. One of them—predominantly negative, destructive, corrosive—is spread out in small circles but is ready to be joined in a large and active conspiracy. The other—more positive, carrying the buds of a future formation—is in a state of somnolence and inaction. I am speaking of the young noblemen and the village commune, which is the basic cell of the entire social tissue, the life-giving source of the Slavic state."

Here side by side with the "active" young noblemen, allegedly ready to take up the solution of the problem abandoned by the ruling class of the West-European countries, the author mentions another social factor which, in spite of its passive nature, is, in Herzen's view, an extremely fortunate feature of Russia—communal land tenure. The existence of the commune will facilitate enormously the progressive reformatory work of the active young noblemen. Thus Russia will realise the socialist ideal

which the West elaborated in its development but could not translate into reality.

This reasoning shows us how the author of the book *From Another Shore* could strengthen his faith in Russia despite the fact that his faith in Western Europe had collapsed. It also helps us to understand all the main distinctive features of his subsequent activities as a publicist.

Settling in London, he started a printing-house—the first really free (that is, free from censorship) Russian printing-house—and immediately began advocating the emancipation of the peasants. The struggle against serfdom became his most important goal. But whom did he appeal to? The noblemen, first and foremost. Addressing this estate, he wrote in his brochure *St. George's Day! St. George's Day!*:

"We are slaves, because we are masters. We are servants, because we are landowners.... We are serfs, because we hold in bondage our brothers, our equals in birth, in blood, in language. There is no freedom for us as long as the damnation of serfdom hangs over us.... On St. George's Day<sup>181</sup> a new life will dawn on Russia. Our emancipation will begin on St. George's Day."

It may now seem strange that, in starting the struggle for the *abolition* of serfdom, Herzen appealed first of all to the estate that was most interested in its *preservation*. It would have been most natural to appeal to the estate that suffered more than any other from serfdom, i.e., the peasantry. But Herzen was quite consistent in his way. One could appeal to the peasantry only if one counted on their ability to take political action. Herzen did not count on it at all. In his view of the probable development of Russia towards socialism the peasants were assigned a passive role, whereas the "young noblemen" were to play the active role of initiators. As to the question of a possible contradiction between Herzen's programme of emancipating the peasants and the interests of the nobility as an estate, that question was solved by the hope that the advanced section of this estate would be able to rise above those interests. That was not Herzen's view only, his friend N. P. Ogarev agreed with him entirely.

In Issue 2 of the *Polyarnaya Zvezda*<sup>182</sup> (1856) there appeared a very interesting article by Ogarev (who then signed his articles "R. Ch."<sup>183</sup>) under the title "Russian Questions". There the author, among other things, asks whose assistance the government could enlist in undertaking the cause of emancipating the serfs, and answers it thus:

"The people are little able to express an idea, which is more in the nature of an instinct or feeling with them, and not a clear thought.

"The grandees? Men possessing five, twenty, thirty, or a hundred and fifty thousand serfs.... But they are men who have never

come into contact with the people and their needs, never done any thinking, whose sole occupation is spending enormous sums of money that drop from the sky, as it were, indulging freely all their wildest whims. No, these are poor counsellors!

"The small landowners? But they are men lacking in education, men who squeeze the life blood out of the peasant.... Poor counsellors, these!

"The merchants? But they form a caste which enjoys its exclusiveness and believes itself to be the spider and the rest to be the flies, and therefore measures the well-being of the state by its own profit gained in all sorts of unfair ways. Poor counsellors, these!

"The officials?... But they are members of an enormous organisation of universal robbery, where the periphery picks up kopecks and the rubles roll to the centre. Poor counsellors, these!... Besides, just try and lay your hand on their little circulars—you will see what bureaucratic conceit is like. Poor counsellors, these!

"What is left is that section of the middle-class nobility, which, on the one hand, has received an education at higher educational institutions and is accustomed to thinking, and, on the other hand, has lived in the country and knows the people and their needs and, withal, has not sold its conscience for an official position. Yes, the young government\* should turn to educated Russian people, selecting them not for length of service, but for their independence of service, not for the significance of their rank, but for the insignificance of their rank."\*\*\*

All these arguments are extremely characteristic of the views of Ogarev and Herzen at that time. According to both of them, the emancipation of the peasants was to be only the first major step along the road of Russia's socialist development. Therefore, while calling upon the government and the nobility to abolish serfdom, Ogarev and Herzen took pains to stress Russia's economic uniqueness.

"We have nothing to borrow from petty-bourgeois Europe," writes Herzen. "We are not petty bourgeois, we are moujiks."\*\*\* This idea—the basic idea of all Russian Narodniks—is substantiated by Herzen in detail in the same article.

"We are poor in cities and rich in villages. All the efforts to produce here an urban bourgeoisie in the Western sense have so far led to but a few absurd consequences. Our only townsmen are officials; the merchants are closer to the peasants than to the officials. The landowners are naturally more country-dwellers than town-dwellers. Thus, here the town represents only the gov-

\* That is, the government of Alexander II.

\*\* Pp. 274-75. I am quoting the 2nd edition.

\*\*\* *Polyarnaya Zvezda*, Issue 2, 1856, 2nd ed. The article signed "I-r", under the title "Forward! Forward!", pp. VII and VIII.



ernment, the Russian state, whereas the village is the whole of Russia, the Russia of the people.

"Our original and specific feature is the village with its communal administration of law, the village assembly, elected representatives and no individual landownership, the division of the fields according to the number of households. Our village commune has survived that difficult period of state growth in which communes usually decline, and has escaped destruction under a double yoke, remaining intact under the blows of the landowners' stick and robbery by officials."\*

The idea of Russia's economic uniqueness which enables us to by-pass the "petty-bourgeois" path of West-European development was so prominent in Herzen's thinking that he felt obliged to express it even in one of his numerous letters to Emperor Alexander II. I have in mind the letter concerning the well-known book by Baron Korf on Emperor Nicholas I's accession to the throne. Having pointed out there that we receive as free gifts those truths and results which the Western peoples attained through civil strife and heavy losses, he adds:

"On her sick bed, as it were, making a confession or bequeathing her last mystery, acquired dolefully and too late, Europe points out as the only road to salvation precisely those elements which are so strong and so deeply embedded in the people's character, and not only in Peter the Great's Russia, at that, but in all Russian Russia. That is why we believe that the development will take a different path here."\*\*

## XI

The first condition necessary for Russia to take a different path of economic development was, Herzen and Ogarev believed, the emancipation of the peasants with land. This measure would prevent the emergence of a proletariat in Russia and spare Russia all the sufferings and disturbances which followed its emergence in the West.

"...O my Russia!" exclaims Ogarev in the article "Russian Questions" quoted above. "I would pay dearly for you to be saved from all the sufferings of Western development—from futile bloodshed, breaking up of property, pauperism, the proletariat, formally just and humanly unjust courts of law, oppression, ignominious petty-bourgeois tyranny, hypocrisy—so that you should develop peacefully, through eternally youthful reform."

Ogarev believes that if the peasants are emancipated without land the nobility "will play the role of the Western petty bour-

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\* Ibid., p. VIII.

\*\* *Kolokol*, No. 4.

geoisie instead of the role of the educated class of the state", and then Russia will become the scene of disturbances "of terrible cruelty".\* Fear of such disturbances evidently figured prominently in Ogarev's and Herzen's thinking on Russian problems. In Issue 3 of the *Kolokol* (September 1, 1857), Ogarev wrote in an article entitled "Orders of the Government":

"The present government seems to have realised that there are no elements of European revolution in Russia, that it has nothing to fear on this score; but also that Russia, exhausted by a state administration supported by police violence, demands a renaissance; that, unless the government heads this renaissance, it may meet with a different kind of a revolution, not the European kind at all, but a wild one, hostile to education; that a peasant revolution in Russia is all the more possible because the army will be for it; that there is no other country where the army, despite the long term of service, would be as friendly with the people as in Russia."

It should not be thought that the *Kolokol*, in the person of Ogarev, depicted the possible peasant revolution in Russia as a wild one and hostile to education with the sole aim of intimidating the government. True, he was probably not averse to the desire to intimidate it. However, judging by Herzen's and Ogarev's way of thinking at that time, one has to assume that this desire manifested itself in the above-mentioned article only in the very slight exaggeration of the probability of a peasant revolution ("a peasant revolution in Russia is all the more possible because...", etc.), while the depiction of this revolution as a wild and uncontrolled phenomenon corresponded entirely, one would think, to the conviction of the *Kolokol* publishers.

We have seen above that Herzen was by no means a supporter of class struggle on principle. He insisted that the petty bourgeoisie in the West could *only* be defeated by a workers' revolution, but this conviction merely expressed his disappointment in Western Europe. Besides, he believed that in the West, too, a workers' revolution could become inevitable only as a result of the backwardness of the masses. The following passage from Herzen's article "Another Variation on an Old Theme" leaves no doubt on this score:

"I do not regard the question of the future of Europe as finally solved; having studied the West with great thoroughness and respect for truth, prejudiced more in favour of the West than

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\* Whereas Herzen and Ogarev feared that the Russian nobility would assume the role of the Western petty bourgeoisie instead of "the role of the educated class of the state", Belinsky not long before his death arrived at the opposite conviction; in a letter to Annenkov dated February 15, 1848, he wrote: "It is clear now that Russia's inner process of civil development will begin only when the Russian nobility turns into a bourgeoisie...."

against it, having studied it for ten years not in theories and books but at clubs and in the squares, at the centre of all its political and social life, I must say that *I see neither a speedy nor a satisfactory solution*. Taking into account, on the one hand, the feverish, one-sided development of industry; the concentration of all wealth, both spiritual and material, in the hands of the minority of the middle class; the fact that the latter has control of the church and the government, machines and schools, that the army obeys it and the courts rule in its favour; and bearing in mind, on the other hand, the backwardness of the masses, the immaturity and vacillation of the revolutionary party, I do not envisage a speedy downfall of the petty-bourgeoisie and a renovation of the old state structure without the most awful and bloody fight.”\*

However great his disappointment in Western Europe, Herzen could not fail to see, however, that the Russian people en masse were less advanced than, for instance, the French or the Germans. Therefore the explosion in the Russian people must have seemed to him an even less “*satisfactory solution*” than a popular uprising in a Western country. Our Narodniks of the seventies saw this problem in quite a different light. They were not at all distressed by the class struggle in the West, and the peasant revolution, for which they tried to pave the way with all their might and main, did not figure in their fantasy as a “wild” popular movement “hostile to all education”. Here they differed strongly from Herzen and Ogarev. Yet this is only a minor point, though a very important one from the *tactical* point of view. As for the basic *theoretical* views—e.g., the view of Russia’s economic uniqueness and the path of development which she ought to follow—the Narodniks of the seventies borrowed them entirely, though not completely consciously, from Herzen and Ogarev. We are therefore fully justified in saying that already in their early works published at the Free Press in London, Herzen and Ogarev appeared as the fathers of the Russian Narodnik movement. In this capacity of the fathers of the Russian Narodnik movement they embarked upon their publicistic campaign against serfdom.

The entire literature of “Russian socialism” of the seventies and eighties was a recapitulation of the theoretical views that were originally advocated by Herzen, Ogarev and their associates already before the emancipation of the peasants.\*\* The extent to which this is so can be seen from the following example.

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\* *Works*, Vol. X, p. 285.

\*\* The socialist literature of the sixties can only be touched upon insofar as it was not dominated by the influence of Chernyshevsky, who disagreed with Herzen on many points. It is known that he even entered into polemics with the publisher of the *Kolokol* on the problem of the relationship between Russia and the West. See his article “On the Causes of the Fall of Rome”.

It is a well-known fact that our home-grown "sociologists" of the seventies tried hard to work out "a formula for progress". But here again all their conclusions had been anticipated by the circle of Herzen and Ogarev. In an article entitled "The Place of Russia at the World Fair" N. Sazonov wrote in reply to the question as to "what constitutes genuinely human enlightenment":

"The development of the individual by and for increasingly diverse, increasingly complicated relations with other men and with the whole world. The more comprehensive and at the same time more conscious and correct these relations are, the more ennobled and definite the individual feels, the more he achieves genuine freedom, i.e., a conscious and zealous execution of nature's immutable laws."\*

Recall "the formula for progress" of the late Nik. Mikhailovsky<sup>184</sup> and compare it with what N. Sazonov says here; you will see that the only difference is in the name, as one of them calls *progress* that which the other calls *enlightenment*. In its content, Nik. Mikhailovsky's "progress" is merely another edition of N. Sazonov's "enlightenment". I wish to direct the attention of the perspicacious Mr. Ivanov-Razumnik to this point. N. Sazonov found that "at the present moment in its development West-European humanity" is following a path which is going in the opposite direction from that of genuine enlightenment. Russia was, in his opinion, much closer to the latter path. If she lagged behind the West industrially, it was "only because industry is in the bourgeois period now, and there is no bourgeoisie in Russia". That is also a purely Narodnik argument.\*\*

The Westerners (I. S. Turgenev among them) reproached Herzen for the fact that his view of Russia brought him close to the Slavophiles. "These reproaches are in themselves evidence," he rejoined, "that your strife with the Moscow Slavophiles has not abated; that is a pity." After the death of Emperor Nicholas the

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In his turn, Herzen believed Chernyshevsky to be an advocate of "purely Western socialism", which served, in his view, as "a complement to Russian socialism". He said that Chernyshevsky's milieu "was that of the town and the university, a milieu of profound grief, conscious dissatisfaction and indignation; it consisted exclusively of members of the intellectual movement, the proletariat and the intelligentsia". On the contrary, Herzen viewed as typically Russian "that kind of socialism which derives from the land and peasant customs, from the actual allotment of land and its existing re-allotment, communal land tenure and communal administration, and which, together with the workers' artels, is striving for the economic *justice* for which socialism in general is striving and which is confirmed by science" (*Kolokol*, No. 233-34). It need hardly be added that Herzen regarded himself and Ogarev as representatives of this socialism.

\* *Polyarnaya Zvezda*, Issue 2, 2nd ed., p. 228.

\*\* N. Sazonov differed on some points from Herzen. But, as we see, they had a completely identical view of the relation between Russia and the West.

struggle against the Slavophiles lost all its interest and meaning. Herzen rejects with horror some of the Slavophiles' practical goals: "they savour of the torture-chamber, torn nostrils, penance, penitence, the Solovki monastery." Nonetheless, he admits: "I have never disputed that the Slavs have a true awareness of the *living soul* in the people." He found, too, that the Westerners' customary arguments against Slavophiles had lost their force. You cannot dislodge the Slavophiles from their positions by using the West as an example, "when any issue of any newspaper will show the horrible disease that is destroying Europe". The Westerners like European ideas. Herzen likes them, too, as "these are the ideas of all history", and "without them we should have fallen into Asiatic quietism or African obtuseness". Only these ideas will help Russia to take possession of the historical heritage that has been bequeathed to her. "But you do not wish to know," Herzen says addressing the Westerners, "that life in Europe to-day does not conform to its ideas. You are afraid for them; ideas that are not realised at home seem to you incapable of realisation anywhere." Herzen does not share this fear. In analysing the Russian people's way of life, he regards the commune as the guarantee of the realisation of the social ideas elaborated in the West.\* He agrees with the Slavophiles only in his view of the West and of the importance of the Russian commune. But on these points he comes very close to them. An awareness of this closeness is expressed in his own words, which were addressed to one of his opponents from the Slavophil side several years after his controversy with the Westerners outlined above.

"A year ago\*\* on a steamship sailing from Naples to Livorno I met a Russian who was reading works in a new edition of Khomyakov's. When he started dozing, I asked him to give me the book and read quite a lot from it. Translating from the apocalyptic language into our ordinary one and casting the light of day on what Khomyakov sees by the light of a church chandelier, I saw clearly that on many points we understood the Western question in the same way, in spite of differences in explanations and conclusions."\*\*\*

While working for the *Polyarnaya Zvezda* and particularly the *Kolokol*, on some special points of "Russian socialism", Ogarev came even closer to the Slavophiles than Herzen. He said:

"While I disagree completely with any religion and, consequently, with their [i.e., the Slavophiles'.—G. P.] transformed Orthodoxy, nonetheless I or, rather, we call them sincerely

\* See the article "Another Variation on an Old Theme". This article, dated February 3, 1857, is reprinted in the Geneva edition of Herzen's *Works*, Vol. X, pp. 281-97.

\*\* Herzen wrote this in October 1864.

\*\*\* *Kolokol*, No. 191, "Letters to an Opponent".

and frankly the prophets of Russian civic development."\*

Ogarev finds rudiments of Slavophilism already in the Decembrists. He points to A. Odoyevsky's poem "The Slavic Cause". The poem savours of Panslavism, perhaps, but there is not a hint of Slavophilism, properly speaking, in it.\*\*

Many years later I. Aksakov called our Narodnik movement inconsistent Slavophilism. As Herzen and Ogarev were the fathers of the Narodnik movement, I. Aksakov would probably agree to include their teaching in his evaluation. And it must be admitted that in a sense he would have been quite right.

## XII

Herzen's first publications abroad did not meet with any sympathy in Russia.\*\*\* It may be assumed that some landowners already understood that under the economic relations that existed in the mid-nineteenth century serfdom had ceased to be a necessary condition for the material welfare of the nobility. This is supported, among other things, by a curious testimony from Perovsky, the Minister of Internal Affairs.

In his memorandum on the abolition of serfdom submitted to Emperor Nicholas already in 1845, Perovsky said that the peasant question had become "a rather common subject of frank discussion in the educated classes..."\*\*\*\* According to the same Minister, these classes did not show any fear at the thought of the abolition of serfdom.

"Time and the new relations," says he, "have changed completely the *educated* landowners' view of serfdom: they are, of course, afraid of the consequences of emancipation, *knowing the ungovernable nature of the people once they have altered their usual position in some respect or transgressed the boundaries of submission*; but the owners are no longer afraid of losing their property

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\* See his interesting article "Caucasian Spa", in Issue 6 of *Polyarnaya Zvezda* for 1861, p. 353.

\*\* The poem says that

In the family of Slavs, the eldest maid

Is also the tallest and quite the most staid,

and that she should hurry to the fields with the younger sisters, leading them in the round dance and twining all their hands together. The elder maiden is, of course, Russia. But it is a far cry indeed from this to Slavophilism. Let me add that we also find in Herzen admissions like the following: "The work of the Slavophiles prepared the material for understanding—theirs is the honour and the glory of the initiators" (from the article "Repetitio est mater studiorum", *Kolokol*, No. 107).

\*\*\* "We had to fall silent at the beginning of 1854," he says in the article "To Our People", *Polyarnaya Zvezda*, Issue 1, 2nd ed., p. 230.

\*\*\*\* В. И. Семевский, «Крестьянский вопрос в России» и т. д., т. II, стр. 135-136. [V. I. Semevsky, *The Peasant Question in Russia, etc.*, Vol. II, pp. 135-36.]

by granting men their freedom. The landowners themselves are beginning to realise that the peasants are a burden to them, and that it would be desirable to alter these mutually unprofitable relations."\* Perovsky remarks very aptly that the landowners were led to this conclusion by the growing cost of land and the successful experiments in employing hired farm labour in the Saratov, Tambov, Penza, Voronezh and some other gubernias. He remarks, however, that although the greater part of our nobility are not afraid that they will lose their property through abolition of serfdom, they do "*fear the consequences of the upheaval, which should be feared by any sensible person who knows the people and their concepts and inclinations*".\*\*

The attitude of the nobility being what it was it would be difficult to expect them to respond to an appeal by an emigrant whose works were brought to Russia (when they were brought at all) as contraband. Perovsky's testimony refers to 1845, and at the time when Herzen's first publications abroad appeared, the attitude of the nobility was even more conservative. Frightened by the aggravation of the class struggle in the West, which was manifested in the 1848-49 revolution our "society" wanted one thing only—peace and quiet. Even I. Kireyevsky wrote to M. P. Pogodin in April 1848 that "we can make only two demands on the government: first, that it should not drag us into a useless war; second, that it should not disturb the people by false rumours of freedom and should not introduce any new legislation until things in the West have quietened down".\*\*\*

That was the time when society, as censor Nikitenko put it, was sinking swiftly into barbarity. And this decline in public mood did not leave even Herzen's closest friends unaffected. They did not approve of his plans for publishing abroad. In the autumn of 1853 his old friend, the well-known actor M. S. Shchepkin, came to London. He tried to talk the exile into abandoning his underground activities, as we would now say. He told Herzen: "What good will your publishing do? You will ruin a lot of people, ruin your friends. I would go down on my old knees and beg you to stop while there is still time." Herzen refused to leave the underground, but he would probably have had to wait a long time for a sympathetic response from his Motherland, had it not been for the Crimean War. Nicholas I's death and the fall of Sebastopol stirred up public opinion in Russia and raised new hopes in Herzen's breast. It was at that time that he started the publication of the *Polyarnaya Zvezda* and later of the *Kolokol*.

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\* Ibid., p. 138.

\*\* Ibid., same page.

\*\*\* I. V. Kireyevsky, *Works*, Moscow, 1911, Vol. II, p. 249.

In the very first issue of the *Polyarnaya Zvezda* Herzen published an open letter to the new tsar, containing an entire programme of reforms.

"Sire," he wrote, "grant the Russians freedom of speech. Our mind is cramped, our ideas poison our breast for lack of space, they groan in the shackles of censorship. Grant us free speech... we have a message for the world and for our people.

"Give the land to the peasants. It belongs to them in any case. Deliver Russia from the stigma of serfdom, cure the black weals on the backs of our brethren, these terrible signs of contempt for man.

"...Hurry! Save the peasant from future villainy, save him from the blood that he will have to shed....

"...I am ashamed that we are prepared to be content with so little; we want things the justice of which you doubt just as little as anyone else.

"For the present we should be content with this...."

After what has been said above it is quite clear, I hope, why the emancipation of the peasants with land was the focal point of Herzen's programme. This demand was characteristic of our great publicist's "social" views; as for his appeal to the new emperor, it is no less characteristic of his *political* mode of thinking.

In touching on Herzen's student years and his enthusiasm for Saint-Simon, I noted that later in his publicistic work he repeated Saint-Simon's mistake of failing to understand clearly the causal relationship between "economics" and "politics". I added there that this mistake was characteristic not only of Saint-Simon but all utopian socialists. It is now time to supplement this with the fact that it was also extremely characteristic of Proudhon, who made a strong impact on Herzen during the first years of his life abroad.

The great Russian publicist praises Proudhon: "Politics, in the sense of old-time liberalism and the constitutional republic, are relegated to the background by him, as something that is passing and has almost passed. He is indifferent to questions of politics, he is ready to make concessions, as he does not attribute any particular significance to forms, that are, in his opinion, of no consequence."

Herzen in the heyday of his publicistic activity also viewed politics as something that is passing or has almost passed. That explains his appeal to the government. He made "enormous" concessions precisely because political forms were of little consequence in his eyes.

This is the only explanation of the fact, for example, that the same issue of the *Polyarnaya Zvezda* that carried Herzen's letter to Emperor Alexander II, contained A. Talandier's



article "No Socialism Without a Republic". Herzen, who rightly believed himself to be an incorrigible socialist, in all probability shared this view of Talandier in theory, but did not feel obliged to be guided by it *in practice* at the time when it became possible, in his view, for Russia to make the first major steps to socialism. This might seem strange, if we did not know that, like Proudhon, he was "indifferent" to political questions and was ready to make concessions, "as he did not attribute any particular significance to forms, that were, in his opinion, of no consequence".

### XIII

Once again: this is a mistake. "Politics" are by no means something secondary. Each given political regime grows out of the given class relations that are ultimately reducible to property relations. The nature of the class relations that exist at a given time in a given country determines the nature of the political regime that exists in it. And the nature of this regime, in its turn, determines what it can do in the way of social transformation. One could not expect a political regime that was formed and established, historically, to express the interests of the nobility, to carry out reforms incompatible with the essential interests of this estate. But the publishers of the *Kolokol* expected and demanded just that from the Russian regime of that time. Thus they prepared themselves for a long sequence of bitter disappointments. The disappointments came very soon, but in the meantime—and this is a very interesting fact!—Herzen's mistake was of benefit to him in that it widened the sphere of his influence.

In August 1857 K. D. Kavelin, not knowing at the time that the first issue of the *Kolokol* had appeared on June 1 of the same year, wrote to Herzen advising him to start publication of a militant organ. "But," he added, "the organ must be a moderate one, so that it can take into account all interests and express all opinions. However strange it may seem to you, our society is little preoccupied with the political question, but very much so with administrative, social and clerical ones. Chaos, absurdity and incongruity have reached colossal proportions in the government of the country, and there is no place to whip them by quoting examples." Russian society was little interested in the "political question" because of its political backwardness, and Herzen regarded the question as a minor one because he took Proudhon's standpoint.

Different causes led to identical consequences: the *Kolokol* put into the foreground the "administrative and social" questions that were of the greatest interest to Russian readers at that time.

It later turned out that Herzen the incorrigible socialist could not resolve these questions in the way in which the majority of his temporary admirers would have them solved. And then these temporary admirers turned their backs on the *Kolokol*. But at the beginning they were carried away by the moderate character of Herzen's programme. A. M. Unkovsky says in his memoirs that within two or three years the majority of the nobility in Tver changed their views entirely under the influence of the *Kolokol*. One might think that the Tver nobility ceased to be nobility under the influence of the *Kolokol*. That, of course, was not the case. We know that even the famous liberals of Tver staunchly defended their class interests.\* For the time being, however, they did not notice that Herzen's view of the "administrative and social" questions was quite different from theirs, despite his moderate programme. And Herzen did not notice it either.

When Alexander II announced in his Moscow address<sup>185</sup> that it was better to free the peasants from above than to wait till they began to free themselves from below, Herzen responded to these words (in No. 2 of the *Kolokol*, August 1, 1857) with the leader "Revolution in Russia". "We are not just on the eve of an upheaval, we are in the midst of it," he wrote. "Necessity and public opinion have drawn the government into a new phase of development, change, progress. The society and the government have come up against questions that suddenly received universal recognition and became urgent. This ferment of thought, its restlessness and desire to find new solutions for the principal goals of the life of the state, to subject to analysis the historical forms in which it progresses, constitute the necessary basis for any radical upheaval."

Herzen anticipated the objection that radical social upheavals are the result of a struggle between the social forces, i.e., a state of society of which there were no clear signs in contemporary Russia. His answer to that is that in Russia things have been different from the West since time immemorial, innovations coming from above and not from below: the only radical upheaval

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\* Thus, the same A. M. Unkovsky in his memorandum on the peasant question submitted to Alexander II in December 1857 insisted "that the value of any populated estate based on serfdom consists not in land alone but in the men as well, and the landowner must be recompensed for the men just as he is for the land, the more so that in some localities land without the men has no value whatever". Unkovsky believed, however, that the compensation for the serfs must be paid not only by the serfs themselves but by "all the classes of the state". A. M. Unkovsky was one of the most liberal noblemen of his time (his memorandum was reprinted in a routinely enthusiastic book by Гр. Джаншиев, «А. М. Унковский и освобождение крестьян», М., 1894, стр. 58-71 [Gr. Djanshiev, *A. M. Unkovsky and the Emancipation of Peasants*, Moscow, 1894, pp. 58-71]).

which she experienced was engineered by *Tsar* Peter I. "Since 1789," he goes on to say, "we have grown accustomed to the fact that all upheavals are brought about through explosions, uprisings, that every concession is wrung by force, that every step forward is taken amid fighting, so that now, when an upheaval is mentioned, we involuntarily look for city squares, barricades, blood, the executioner's axe. Undoubtedly uprising or open fighting is one of the most powerful instruments of the revolution, but by no means the only one." On behalf of the *Kolokol* editorial board Herzen announces that it wholeheartedly prefers "the path of peaceful human development to the path of bloody development..."\*

The well-known rescript to Nazimov of November 20, 1857,<sup>186</sup> elicited from the *Kolokol* (No. 7) the article "Emancipating the Peasants", which said:

"We wished to follow all the details of governmental decrees for last year, but the details recede before the great events taking place in our native land, so that instead of following the minor details we begin the year 1858 with a greeting to Alexander II for taking the first steps towards abolishing serfdom. We are convinced that he will not be indifferent to this warm greeting from men who have no fear of him, who are not expecting or asking for anything of him for themselves, to this greeting of free Russian men to the tsar who is abolishing slavery. We are happy to be able to begin the new year with that: let it be a really new era for Russia."

This article was written by Ogarev, not Herzen, but here again it makes no difference, for, I repeat, Herzen held absolutely identical views, which is best seen from his famous article "In Three Years" published in No. 9 of the *Kolokol*, February 15, 1858. In it Herzen addresses Alexander II with the words: "*Thou hast won, Galilean!* And it is easy for us to say so, as our struggle does not involve either vanity or personality. We have fought for a cause; honour goes to him who has won the cause." The article goes on to say that since Alexander II showed himself to the people as an advocate of the emancipation of the peasants, his name belongs to history, and future generations will not forget this step. In Herzen's view, Alexander II was as much heir to December 14 as to Nicholas. The article ends with the

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\* His words about uprising being one of the most powerful instruments of the revolution would appear to contradict what has been said above about his attitude to the class struggle. But, first, "one of the most powerful" does not mean "one of the best". Second, what disturbed Herzen about the 1848-49 revolution was not the fact that it was a forcible revolution but rather that this forcible revolution was a manifestation of the class struggle which led to a split between the "educated class", on the one hand, and the proletariat, on the other. He did not see any such split in the 1789 revolution.

same words with which it began: "*Thou hast won, Galilee!*"

It will be appropriate to recall here the episode of Ogarev's signature. Up to issue No. 9 of the *Kolokol* he signed his articles with the letters R. Ch., but in issue No. 9 he announced that he felt pained to have to hide himself from Alexander II behind a pseudonym and that therefore he would henceforth sign his articles with his real and full name.\* He was moved that far—but no farther.

#### XIV

Already at that time this emotion was not shared by everybody, it would seem. But it was undoubtedly shared by very many, and one of those who shared it was the sarcastic N. G. Chernyshevsky. He wrote this in connection with the same steps of the new government:

"The splendid deeds of the time of Peter the Great and the colossal personality of Peter himself dazzle our imagination; the essential greatness of his feat is indubitable. We do not know what external events we shall witness in the future. But the cause of abolishing serfdom alone blesses the time of Alexander II with the highest glory. The blessing that was promised to the peacemakers and the meek crowns Alexander II with the great fortune of ... beginning and bringing about alone the emancipation of his subjects."\*\*

In addressing Alexander II, Herzen repeated the words ascribed to Julian the Apostate, whereas Chernyshevsky took as an epigraph to his article the words of the psalmist: "Thou hast loved truth and thou hast hated lawlessness, for that thy God hast anointed thee."

Soon Chernyshevsky's reaction to the progress on the peasant reform changed. Herzen's *Kolokol* already at the end of 1858 began making noises that were in complete discord with the jubilant mood just described. We read in a letter to the editor in issue No. 25 (October 1, 1858): "To go on believing in Alexander is futile. However hard it may be to have to admit one's mistake, one must not be childish, this is no time for that sort of thing." The editors provided this letter with a note, thanking the author for his letter. However, already in issue No. 60, of January 1, 1860, Herzen admitted that he was entering the new decade with less firm hope than that with which he had greeted the

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\* That was in February 1858. And in April 1859 Ogarev answered the government's invitation to return to Russia with a letter to the emperor: "I shall return to Russia when she is ruled by your liberating will and not the tyranny of self-interested, unjust and worthless dignitaries who hide from you the truth and the people's real life."

\*\* N. G. Chernyshevsky, *Works*, St. Petersburg, 1906, Vol. IV, p. 54. The article is called "On the New Conditions of Country Life".

"era of the revival" of Russia, and addressed an urgent appeal to the emperor.

"Wake up, Sire!" exclaims he. "The new year of the new decade has chimed, a decade which will perhaps bear your name; but you cannot with one and the same hand sign your name bright and clear in the annals of history as the emancipator of peasants and also sign absurd decrees against freedom of speech and against youth, against the young. You are deceived, you deceive yourself: this is yuletide masquerade, these are all mummers. Order them to take off their masks and see who are Russia's friends and who care for nothing but their own advantage. It is all the more important for you as Russia's friends *may yet be* yours, too. Order the masks to be taken off...", etc.

In issue No. 95, dated April 1 of the next year, in the article "The Manifesto", there is a new and even more sympathetic appeal to Alexander II, whom the author of the article greets as the Emancipator: "The emancipation of the peasants was only *begun* with the proclamation of the manifesto. It is not rest and not triumph that await Your Majesty, but unremitting toil; it is not rest and not freedom that await the people but a new and awful temptation. The *second* step, quick, quick!"

In August 1862 Herzen, trying to justify himself against the reproach that he had lost all faith in forcible upheavals, argues that in Russia one may expect anything from the state power.

"Imperial power in Russia is *power only*, that is, might, structure, *establishment*; it does not have any content, it carries no obligations, it may become a Tartar khanate or the French Committee of Public Safety: was not Pugachev Emperor Peter III?\*" In view of these unlimited possibilities, Russia's progressive public leaders must make every effort to steer the government along the right path. "But for the tsardom to become people's power, it should understand that the wave that is lapping against it and wants to lift it is indeed a sea wave, that it cannot be stopped or exiled to Siberia, that the tide has turned and that sooner or later tsardom will have to choose between the helm of a people's state and the silt of the sea bottom. Bring all testimonies to prove this, shout it to tsardom day and night.... Let tsardom say its piece—and only after its reply will you know what to say to the people and what goals to set before them."

Herzen's conviction that supreme power in Russia has unlimited practical possibilities is the only explanation for his continual appeals to it even on matters that have no bearing on

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\* In one of his "Letters to a Traveller" (*Kolokol*, No. 203) Herzen says that imperial power in Russia is something purely external. This is in complete agreement with the vagueness in his political views that I have pointed out.

social and political questions.\* In May 1865 (*Kolokol*, No. 197) he published an open letter to Alexander II on the occasion of the death of Crown Prince Nicholas. He said there:

"There are moments in a man's life that are terrible and solemn: at moments like these a man awakens from the routine of everyday life, draws himself up to his full height, shakes off the dust—and is rejuvenated: the believer, through prayer, the non-believer, through reflection. These moments are rare and irretrievable. Woe to him who lets them slip by unnoticed and without trace! You are at a moment like this, Sire—seize it! Under this heavy blow, with a fresh wound in your breast, stop and think, only without the Senate or the Synod, without the ministers or headquarters, think of the path you have traversed, of where you are and where you are going." These appeals, however, were becoming ever rarer. The peasant reform was not proceeding at all in the way the publishers of the *Kolokol* would have liked. Already in June 1861 they announced that they had never anticipated such an abnormal course of events. At the same time Ogarev began to insist that the reform of February 19 did not emancipate the peasants but created a new serfdom. At about the same time the *Kolokol*'s editors expressed their demands in a new and much more radical form. They formulated them in the words that were often repeated later—"land and freedom". They no longer appealed with this motto

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\* Apropos of this: modern social science does not recognise the unlimited possibilities just pointed out. But Herzen's mistake was repeated as late as the beginning of the eighties by N. K. Mikhailovsky. This can be seen from N. Y. Nikoladze's article "Freedom for N. G. Chernyshevsky" published in the September, 1906, issue of *Byloye*. When N. Y. Nikoladze told Mikhailovsky that he was surprised that the men he represented had not (in the case described in the article) made political demands, i.e., had not demanded a "constitution", the latter answered "that now the mood of the party is less elated, and it is convinced that political forms will not result in the consolidation of the power of the friends of the people, but of the bourgeoisie alone, which will constitute regress, not progress" (pp. 255-56). If "Russian socialists" could reason thus in the eighties should we feel surprised at what Herzen wrote in the late fifties? He was certainly not the first socialist to appeal to the supreme power. The socialists of the utopian period, who looked down on politics and were not very particular about their political devices, were very fond of such appeals. I have already cited Saint-Simon as an example. Omitting all other examples, I shall cite the most outstanding one. Proudhon's book *La révolution sociale démontrée par le coup d'état du 2 décembre*, written immediately after the December coup, is an instructive attempt to steer Napoleon III's government along the path of social revolution. It is to Herzen's credit that he never had any illusions about this government. Yet, one may assume that this attempt did make some impact on our great publicist's tactics. Proudhon said that it is all the same to the socialists who it was, who made the social revolution: Louis-Napoleon, Charles X's descendant, Louis-Philippe's offspring or anyone else (see 5th ed. of the book mentioned above, pp. 12-13). Herzen agreed with this approach to the problem, though not unreservedly.

to the government, but to the stratum of the people who were later called in this country the revolutionary intelligentsia, that is, to be more precise, to the educated *raznochintsi*.

In general, Herzen's and Ogarev's expectations of the educated *raznochintsi* grew as rapidly as their expectations of the government and the nobility declined. Before speaking of this, however, we should consider in greater detail the view taken by the *Kolokol* editors of the emancipation of the peasants with land and the changes in this view under the impact of events.

## XV

The reader will remember that, discussing in his first letter to Emperor Alexander II the need to emancipate the peasants with land, Herzen added at once: "it belongs to them in any case." But that does not mean that he demanded the sanctioning of their right to possess land without compensation for the landowners. On the contrary, already in the 1856 issue of the *Polyarnaya Zvezda*, in the article "Russian Questions" quoted above, Ogarev spoke of *redemption* of peasant land. "One can think up a way of rewarding the landowners through bank operations or other means, one must make fresh educated people work on this problem." That was the kind of men that should be sought, as he believed at the time, among the gentry. In issue No. 14 of the *Kolokol* it was also he who published the article "More on the Emancipation of the Peasants", where he stated categorically that "it is possible to emancipate the peasants with land only through redemption, if the landowner's interests are not to suffer".

Using the works of Keppen and Tengoborsky, Ogarev made a calculation; according to that calculation, we had:

Land owned by landowners, total . . . . .	106,228,520	dessiatins
Amount of this unsuitable for cultivation . . . . .	25,190,270	"
<hr/>		
Total of land suitable for cultivation . . . . .	81,038,250	"
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Number of registered serfs mortgaged at credit institutions . . . . .	5,945,533	
Number free of mortgage . . . . .	5,124,528	
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Total . . . . .	11,070,061	
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Land belonging to landowners and used by peasants, suitable for cultivation and occupied by buildings, total . . . . .	33,000,000	dessiatins
Then, land belonging to landowners and used by them, suitable for cultivation . . . . .	48,038,250	"
Unsuitable for cultivation . . . . .	25,190,270	"

On the basis of this calculation Ogarev concluded that "33,000,000 dess. (sic!) with those inhabiting them would have to be redeemed". The Trustee Council was to supervise the operation. It was current practice for this Council to give landowners 70 rubles in silver per serf with the estate as security, the entire land of the estate being thus mortgaged. According to Ogarev's project, the Trustee Council would have to pay 70 rubles in silver per serf "taking into account the amount of land which the peasants possess de facto at the moment, i.e., on which they live and which they cultivate for themselves". Having no money, the Trustee Council would give the landowners promissory notes payable by the Council, and would exact from the peasants 70 rubles in silver per head over 37 years, levying a five per cent loan and one per cent capital each year. Thus the entire redemption operation would be accomplished within 37 years. Paying 70 rubles for 11,000,000 serfs, the Council would have to give the landowners promissory notes to the amount of 770,000,000 rubles in silver.

This project by Ogarev, undoubtedly approved by Herzen, caused an interesting controversy in the *Kolokol*. Issue No. 18 carried "An Objection to the *Kolokol's* Article". The anonymous author<sup>187</sup> wrote: "Et tu quoque, Brute! And the *Kolokol*, too, demands that the Russian moujik should make redemption payments for his human rights and the strip of land washed with his own sweat and blood and that of his forefathers. Et tu quoque, Brute! But tell us, for God's sake, how, why, for what reason should the peasant bear the burden of redemption payments, however small they may be?"

The anonymous author argues against the idea of redemption by saying that Russia has never been conquered and therefore has no feudalism. If M.P. Pogodin happened to read this issue of the *Kolokol*, he must have been very surprised at such an original application of his philosophy of Russian history.

The anonymous author believed, quite rightly, that at the time of the coming emancipation of the peasants one should do one's utmost to make their transition to freedom easier.

But the levy exacted from them for their emancipation would hinder this transition and should be rejected for that reason alone. However, he did not restrict himself to that argument. He pointed out that, according to Ogarev's project, redemption payments would have to be made over 37 years. He asked: "In what position would the peasant have to remain during all this time? Would he remain tied to the land until all the redemption payments have been made? In short, would he be a free man during these 37 years?"

The author challenged Ogarev's project with a project! of his own.



It consisted in the following: a third of the land of each village, woodland excluded, should be set apart and given *free* to the village commune. This part must not in any case exceed three dessiatins per household. The author realised quite well that such an allotment was very small, but he consoled himself and the reader with the argument that the limited size of the allotment in itself possessed a relative advantage. "First, it deprives the landowner of the smallest possible part of his land; second, while providing, more or less, the peasants with their food, their daily bread, at any rate ..., it shows them the need to seek further means of sustenance through renting land from the landowner." This somewhat unexpected argument shows that, while defending the peasants' interests, the anonymous author of the objection was also attentive to the interests of the landowners.

In answering the objection presented here, Ogarev declares first of all that in principle he agreed entirely that the peasant should be allotted land free of charge. Such a project was a noble one, and it was difficult not to sympathise with it. The only trouble was that it was impracticable.

"The majority of the landowners will not only fail to agree to free allotment of land, they will hardly agree to redemption: so deeply is the love not just of owning land, but also of owning slaves ingrained in them. A considerably smaller section will agree immediately to redemption; but only a few individuals will perhaps agree to free allotment of land."

Anyway, Ogarev had no wish to defend his own project either, as he was well aware of its drawbacks. The only thing in it that he urged "is the idea of redemption for peasants and land through a financial measure. It has taken root in Russia, and on this foundation the future of our peasant commune grows".\*

Ogarev's arguments did not convince the anonymous author. In issues Nos. 40-41 of the *Kolokol* he published a new objection to Ogarev. Here he agreed to pay the landowners about 300,000,000 rubles in silver as compensation for land, and that "not without hesitation", as Russia had, in his words, many other needs that were entirely unsatisfied.\*\* The editors of the *Kolokol*, however, firmly stood by the idea of redemption. In the Supplement to issue No. 44 they published a new project for the emancipation of peasants belonging to landowners.

It consisted of two parts. The first part indicated *what* had to be done, the second, *how* it should be done.

The first part in itself was so remarkable that it should be reproduced here in full:

\* *Kolokol*, No. 38, March 15, 1859.

\*\* It should be noted, however, that earlier he also agreed to pay 30 or 40 million rubles in silver to help the small landowners.

"1) Preserve communal land tenure and the entire communal structure in emancipating the landowners' peasants.

"2) Free the landowners' peasants with land as entire communes and not as individual persons or families.

"3) Carry out emancipation fully and at once, without any transitional state.

"4) Grant the commune possession of the same amount of land as it has used up to the moment of emancipation.

"5) Carry out emancipation simultaneously and on the same day throughout Russia.

"6) Make emancipation complete, i.e., emancipation should break off all the obligatory relations between the peasant and the landowner and place the emancipated peasants in the same conditions as those of the state peasants.

"7) Safeguard the interests of both landowners and peasants in emancipating the latter.

"8) To satisfy all the above conditions, emancipation should be carried out through redemption only.

"9) Redemption should be paid for both land and the serfs."

Clauses two to six of this part of the project undoubtedly contain demands that were much more comprehensive than the vast majority of projects advanced by representatives of the landowners and the government. Thus, the implementation of Clause four would have averted the appearance of the "*otrezki*",<sup>188</sup> that were later to become so notorious; if Clause six had been implemented, the emancipated peasants would not have had to drink the bitter cup of "the state of temporary obligation", etc. But the subsequent clauses of this project show that its compilers also took care of the landowners' interests. After Clause seven has reminded one of the need to safeguard the interests of both landowner and peasant in emancipating the latter, the next clause declares that the interests of both sides can only be observed on condition of redemption. Clause nine adds that not only land but serfs as well have to be redeemed, that is, the right of owning *baptized property*, as Herzen would have said. This last demand, quite noteworthy, is elucidated in the project as follows:

"Otherwise the landowners' interests would suffer considerably. The need for redemption of serfs is particularly striking in estates with little land, in industrial estates or those having many servants."

The second part of the project begins with a reiteration of the demand that the emancipated peasants should obtain possession of all the land that is in their actual use (as opposed to "*otrezki*"). All the subsequent clauses contain indications as to the precise mode of implementing the idea of redemption. The authors of the project suggest that the government should

set up assessment committees in uyezds, gubernias and the capital (the central assessment committee). All these committees would be "directed" by the supreme committee that existed at the time. Of some interest is the composition of the uyezd and gubernia committees that the authors believed to be desirable: half the members would be appointed by the government, and the other half, elected by the nobility. Not a word about the peasantry. The very name of these committees ("assessment committees") shows that their task was the assessment of land intended for peasant allotments. This task accomplished, the supreme committee would give the landowners bonds to the amount determined by the assessment minus the sum which the landowners owed for the mortgage of their estates. To pay off the bonds, the emancipated peasants would have to pay a special annual tax. It is now completely superfluous to consider this part of the project in greater detail. I shall merely point to (and ask the reader to note) another clause (Clause 10), which says that the burden imposed on the emancipated peasants by the annual tax for paying off the bonds "may be immediately relieved by an increase in taxes on the state peasants, the guilds<sup>189</sup> and lands remaining in the possession of the landowners".

## XVI

In publishing this project, the *Kolokol* editors provided it with this note:

"We believe it possible and extremely necessary to present in abridged form everything that is true, incontestable and practicable in the literature on this question."

Not everything in the project, however, appeared true and incontestable to them. In the very next issue of the *Kolokol* Ogarev, while expressing himself *in favour of the project* in general, found it necessary to make a very essential reservation in connection with it.

He argued that the committees which were composed partly of landowners and partly of officials would undoubtedly side with the landowner. True, Ogarev himself believed that "the people are little able to express an idea, which is more in the nature of an instinct or feeling with them, and not a clear thought" (see above). Yet he viewed as totally untrue the idea that the task before the assessment committees was beyond the peasants' understanding. "The peasants will easily see what it is all about," he retorted quite justly. To correct the relevant passage in the project, Ogarev made these demands:

- 1) that the sittings of the assessment committees be public;
- 2) that members of the committees appointed by the government be men with a university education;

3) that "objections by the communes have legal force and be published in the press, and that members of the committees be held strictly responsible for neglecting the objections and opinions of the communes".

For the purpose of examining moot points in the highest instance after the passing of the Emancipation Act, he proposed the setting up of courts of arbitration, where the parties would be represented in equal numbers. He also demanded criminal proceedings be instituted against persons found to be intimidating "judges who do not belong to the nobility".

Thus, the editors of the *Kolokol* stood firmly by the idea of redemption by the state. They were greatly astonished at the government's timid attitude towards this idea. "We cannot understand," they said, "the government's fear of compulsory redemption. What is it afraid of?"\*

Some of the *Kolokol* correspondents argued that compulsory redemption of the land to be given to the emancipated peasants would only be advantageous to the landowners. The editorial board, as represented by Ogarev, replied that, if that were so, "so much the better: the moujik is not grudging, he will calmly hand these advantages over to the landowner only to be rid of him".\*\*

The same author who was against compulsory redemption also objected to communal land tenure. Challenging him in the issue of the *Kolokol* indicated above, Ogarev said, among other things, that he regarded the commune as a fact, not as an ideal, and "this fact is capable of original development which, if it is not interfered with, may be much better [than the Western "fact".—G. P.], since it is better suited for peaceful social organisation, recognising as it does the right of each man to the use of land", etc.

This remark, made just in passing, provides new and extremely valuable material for elucidating Ogarev's political views at that time, and thereby also the views of Herzen, who is of particular interest for us. I have already said that Herzen regarded the class struggle as the worst means of solving the social question, and that, apart from this, he preferred, quite sincerely, the peaceful mode of development to the revolutionary one. This view, evidently fully shared by Ogarev, should be borne in mind whenever one speaks of Herzen's attitude to the government of that time, on the one hand, and to the revolutionaries of that time, on the other. We know that Herzen's constant appeals to the emperor were not approved of by all the supporters of the emancipation movement. With time these appeals

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\* *Kolokol*, No. 51, end of the leader.

\*\* See Nos. 57-58 of the *Kolokol*.

began to cause grumblings in the progressive circles that became increasingly louder. In issue No. 64 of the *Kolokol* (March 1, 1860) there appeared a letter from the provinces, signed "A Russian",<sup>190</sup> which severely censured Herzen, who, in the opinion of the writer of the letter had been "confused by the voice of liberal landowners" and had begun to speak favourably of phenomena that could only be spoken about with hatred. The author reminded Herzen, in connection with some of his exaggerated hopes, "that that which is easily given is just as easily taken back". In conclusion he stated categorically: "No, our position is terrible, unbearable, and only the axe can save us, nothing but the axe will help!"

The *Kolokol* editors could not agree with that. In reply to the "Russian" Herzen said that they would not call people to take up the axe while there was the slightest hope of a peaceful outcome. He explained his idea thus:

"The longer and more thoroughly we contemplate the Western world, the more painstakingly we inquire into the phenomena surrounding us ... the greater is our *aversion to bloody upheavals*." In his opinion, such upheavals are sometimes necessary as the fatal consequence of fatal errors. They are sometimes a matter of revenge or tribal hatred. In Russia, however, such elemental forces are absent, and "in this respect our position is unparalleled".

If we compare these statements by Herzen with the apparent moderation of his agrarian programme, we shall have to admit that it would take an "abnormal", in his view, "course of events" to weaken his hope for a peaceful solution of the greatest of all Russian social questions of the day. One cannot help realising also that our protectors did their utmost to weaken it. For instance, after the death of Rostovtsev, the principal figure in the cause of peasant emancipation, the notorious serf-owner Panin was appointed in his place. How could Herzen react to this appointment? His response was a highly indignant paragraph in the *Kolokol* for March 15, 1860:\*

"The impossible news of *Panin's* appointment in *Rostovtsev's* place has been confirmed. The leader of the most savage and most obtuse reactionary party has been made the leader of the cause of peasant emancipation. It was with profound grief that we learned of this. But it is not enough to grieve; these are busy times. This is a challenge, this is insolence, this is a calculated affront to public opinion and a concession to the planters' party. The tenor of the reign has changed, and with it all the relations must change. If they hold dear their cause, if they hold dear the memory that will be left behind them in history, if they

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\* It was framed like an obituary; this was to announce, as it were, the death of some of Herzen's fondest hopes

wish to be pardoned for their bureaucratic vices and their childish attachment to birchings, the members of the Editorial Committees must resign immediately. The minority of the nobility must close its ranks and take up the cause of peasant emancipation. There can be no mistake, Panin's tall figure may be used as a pole crowned with a hat, to scare people away, but it is too *narrow* to hide the features of Nicholas II."

In reading these angry lines, one may well think that Russia, too, was not quite free from "the elemental forces" which are capable of aggravating considerably the struggle between antagonistic social tendencies. One might arrive at the same conclusion on reading, in issue No. 76 of the *Kolokol*, the article "The Legalisation of Robbery by the State",\* directed against the project, which then appeared in certain spheres, of the state peasants paying compensation for their land. The readers of the *Kolokol* did indeed reach this conclusion. But its publishers did not want to part with their former hopes and greeted warmly each step by the government which, in their view, accorded, if only partially, with their hopes. From this point of view, the leading article "The Manifesto" in issue No. 95 of the *Kolokol* (April 1, 1861) is particularly interesting and instructive.

"*The first step has been taken!*" Herzen exclaims there. "They say it is more difficult than the others: let us await the *second* one—with hope; we would have liked to await it with confidence; but everything is done so inconsistently, half-heartedly, so clumsily!...

"...Alexander II has done much, very much; even now his name stands higher than any of his predecessors. He has fought for human rights, in the name of compassion against a predatory crowd of inveterate villains, and he has defeated them! Neither the Russian people nor world history will forget that. Out of the remoteness of our exile we greet him by a name which one rarely uses in connection with autocracy without a bitter smile; we greet him as the *Emancipator!*

"But woe betide him, if he stops, if his tired arm is lowered."

In the next issue of the *Kolokol* Ogarev wrote, in his turn: "Today we say to Alexander II from the bottom of our hearts: blessed be he who comes in the name of freedom! And then—then we shall see what will happen."

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\* We have seen that, according to the project published in issue No. 44 of the *Kolokol*[(part II, § 10), the "burden" of land redemption payments imposed on the emancipated peasants could be "relieved" by an increase in taxes on the state peasants. The *Kolokol* editors did not object to that at all. One may therefore assume that the idea of redemption of the state peasants' land aroused their indignation chiefly because its implementation would eliminate the possibility of shifting part of the "burden" of the landlords' peasants onto the shoulders of the state peasants.

## XVII

Our London publicists soon found out "what would happen". In issue No. 101 of the *Kolokol*, on June 15, 1861 (that is, exactly two months after Ogarev's article quoted at the end of the previous chapter) there appeared an article by the same author entitled "An Analysis of the New Serfdom Made Public on February 19, 1861 in *The Statute Concerning Former Serfs*". Its purpose was to prove that 1) the old serfdom had been replaced by a new serfdom; 2) in general, serfdom had not been abolished; 3) the people ... had been deceived.

"The emancipation of the peasants," Ogarev wrote, "is an historical necessity. But the government is not up to the task, it has not become the leader; nevertheless this line of development will continue irrespective of the government and despite the government. The living movement has got out of hand, and the government has no one to blame but itself."

It is therefore quite understandable that in the very next issue of the *Kolokol* (July 1, 1861) the question "What do the people want?" receives an answer that sounds like a revolutionary slogan: it is very simple—the people want land and freedom. It is argued there that the land belongs to the people because "since time immemorial they had *actually* had possession of the land, they had washed the land with their *sweat and blood actually*, whereas officials used *paper and ink* to hand the land over to the landowners and ... the state".

The idea of redemption, however, is not yet rejected here. The author says that, although the landowners have wrongfully possessed land for 300 years, "yet the people do not want to offend them". Then another project for the redemption of peasant land is suggested, which envisages paying a whole milliard rubles in silver\* to the landowners over 37 years. The author believes it possible to reconcile oneself to this idea "provided the people keep all the land which they cultivate, on which they live", etc.

This article is a kind of new attempt by the *Kolokol* to convince the nobility of the need for what Herzen and Ogarev regarded as the correct solution of the peasant problem. The article in issue No. 115 headed "What Do the Landowners Want?" should also be viewed as just such an attempt. The editors' answer to the question "What do the peasants want?" was "land and freedom", their answer to the question "What do the peasants' former owners need?" was that they needed common sense and money.

"They need the common sense not to argue or fight with the people, otherwise the people will beat them and the govern-

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\* The earlier project mentioned the sum of 770 million only.

ment will suppress them. They need money so that, with their common sense, they can live and work with hired help. At present they still have time to think better of it, later it will be too late."

The article I am quoting here was unsigned; but I have no grounds whatever for assuming that Herzen did not approve of its content in any way. That is why I take it to be, *inter alia*, an expression of his view of the state of affairs at that time. Having accepted it as such, I can say that in December 1861 the publicistic thought of our great writer reverted back to the same point from which he started at the very outset of his propaganda work abroad.

Herzen's first brochure published by his free press appealed to the nobility: *St. George's Day! St. George's Day!* That was in the reign of Nicholas I, when Herzen had no hopes at all for the good will of the government. Later, in the reign of Alexander II, Herzen began to appeal to the government, not to the nobility, trying to prove to the government that it need have no fear of the nobility. Then there came a time when he lost (or as good as lost) his faith in the government. Thereupon he turned again to the nobility, trying to persuade it that it needed nothing but common sense and money. Of course, it was easy for the noble estate to agree with him on the matter of money. It is easy for this estate to agree on this matter with anyone and at any time. It was incomparably more difficult, however, to reach an agreement with it on the matter of common sense. The more Herzen felt convinced that the common sense of the nobility was different from the common sense of the *Kolokol*, the more he turned away from the "lord" and the more frequently he appealed to the *raznochinets*.

In his brochure *St. George's Day! St. George's Day!* Herzen spoke of political freedom as the price history would pay the nobility for giving up serfdom ("we are slaves, because we are masters.... Our emancipation will begin on St. George's Day"). Turning again to the nobility in the early sixties, Herzen raises anew the question of political freedom. But—and that is extremely important—he considers it not from the point of view of the nobility, but from the point of view of the entire people ("of all the estates"). The leading article in issue No. 102, which announces that the people need land and freedom and that they may acquire land by paying the nobility a milliard rubles, advances yet another demand:

"Taxes and duties must be determined and distributed by the people among themselves through their elected representatives.... The trusted men of the people will stand by the people and will not allow money to be exacted from the people unjustly."

It is clear from this and other statements by the *Kolokol* that



"politics" remained something "secondary" for its publishers. Herzen and Ogarev were in no hurry to analyse political questions. After the formulation in July 1861 of the demand, quoted above, concerning "the determination of taxes and duties "by the elected representatives of the people, it was another two years before the *Kolokol* came to consider whether Russia was capable of representative government and what elements should be represented in it?\* These questions were answered in issue No. 166 (June 20, 1863).

It is said there that Russia is capable of representative government: "*Autocracy cannot hold out any longer, and there is no other way out except representative government. For Russia, just as for humanity as a whole, there can be no other way out.*" But the interests of the estates, in the opinion of the author (Ogarev again), cannot be represented in this country: "In Russia, the interests of the volost, the town, the tribe, the locality, the region may be represented *without reference to the estate.*" Proceeding from this conviction, the author found it necessary, in issue No. 164, to contrast the Constitution with the Zemsky Sobor.

"The constitution may be given as an estate constitution," he says there, elucidating the matter. "It may be given as a complete statute which has to be obeyed."

On the contrary, "the Zemsky Sobor, as the congress of the elected representatives of the Zemstvo, is necessarily based on elections irrespective of estates and is convened not for executing the statutes given as an order but for settling the affairs of the Russian land in accordance with the needs of the Zemstvo, for legalising rights of ownership, elected administration and the courts of law, for regional distribution and *constituting the form of government*".

Thus, the Zemsky Sobor, according to the publishers, of the *Kolokol*, is a constituent assembly which is convened not only for elaborating the Russian constitution but, among other things, "for legalising rights of ownership". Could one expect that common sense and the need for money would make our nobility support such demands? Hardly. The common sense of the nobility as an estate would necessarily lend the vague phrase "*legalising rights of ownership*" the more precise meaning of the challenging of the right of the nobility to possess land by the peasant deputies of the proposed Zemsky Sobor. And this sort of challenge would be very distasteful even to the liberal A. M. Unkovsky. That is why the popularity of the *Kolokol* declined sharply among the nobility (and circles ideologically close to it). In a letter to Herzen I. S. Turgenev explained the decline

\* See Ogarev's article "The Constitution and the Zemsky Sobor" ("Clearing Up Certain Matters") in No. 164, June 1, 1863.

in the popularity of the *Kolokol* by the fact that Ogarev had become the principal figure there. But what was so bad about the latter? It goes without saying that his literary talent was very inferior to that of Herzen. Still, his articles were not so bad from the literary point of view as to frighten readers away by their ponderous style. So another explanation has to be sought, and it is not difficult to find.

Herzen's superb lyrical talent made him an incomparable denouncer. Therefore, each time an occasion presented itself for denouncing bureaucracy (the reader will, I trust, believe that at that time, too, such occasions were numerous) or that part of the nobility which staunchly stood by their old privileges, it was Herzen who had to take up the pen. If you would substitute here (according to a venerable literary tradition) the word "whip" for the word "pen", I can say that by the very nature of his talent Herzen's function at the *Kolokol* was mainly whip-lashing. He himself fully realised the *whip-lash* quality of his talent. It was not for nothing that, at the beginning of his propaganda work abroad, he joyously challenged all the retrograde elements of Russian society to a fight. He knew full well beforehand that they would fare ill under his whip-lashing. But being fully occupied with meting out the whip-lashings, he only had time to formulate the general outline of the fundamental theses of his programme. Other men, and, of course, above all his closest associate Ogarev, had to develop them in detail. I have sometimes heard it said that Ogarev took a deeper view than Herzen of the social and political questions of his time. That is not so. Herzen was more gifted than Ogarev in all respects. When he turned his attention to some theoretical or practical question, he treated it much more profoundly, not just more brilliantly. Everything that is in any degree profound and new in the socio-political theory inherited by the Narodniks from the *Kolokol* publishers, belongs to Herzen, not Ogarev. But the individual tenets of this theory were more frequently developed by Ogarev, than Herzen, who was preoccupied, as mentioned above, with denouncing and whip-lashing. This produced a double optical illusion. First, some persons came to believe Ogarev to be a more profound writer than Herzen; second, those who found it unpleasant to attribute to Herzen the social views of the *Kolokol* editors that were not to their liking, ascribed them in toto to Ogarev, who only expounded them in detail. That was what I. S. Turgenev did, which explains his reference, quoted above, to Ogarev as the cause of the decline in the popularity of the *Kolokol*. The French have an apt saying: *ce sont les enfants des autres qui gâtent les nôtres*.\*

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\* [It is the children of others who spoil ours.]

In actual fact there was a division of labour between Herzen and Ogarev at that time, not a difference of opinion. I have therefore made bold (and shall do so in the future) to refer to Ogarev in a work properly devoted to Herzen. Such references are necessary to explain the views of the latter.

## XVIII

In issue No. 134 of the *Kolokol* (May 22, 1864), we read in the article "Where To and Where From?": "Eliminate police officers and state courts of law, but leave the lion's share of the land to the nobility—and landowners' rule and landowners' courts will soon spring up, even if the peasants own a share of the land and are freed from the *corvée*."

This approach to the problem, which reduced the principal task of the future Zemsky Sobor to cutting down the size of the landowners' property, could only appeal to those noblemen who had abandoned completely the point of view of their estate (it would be better to say in this case, of their class, i.e., of landowners) and accepted the viewpoint of the peasantry. The *Kolokol* editors sensed this, and now they, too, unconditionally approved the radical solution of the agrarian question. Issue No. 131 carried a very interesting article "Vote for the People (A Landowner's Letters). Letter One". The author of this article undoubtedly belonged to those landowners who had finally joined forces with the progressive *raznochintsi*. He advocated the transfer to the people of all the land which they possessed, and the cultivation of the land which remained in the possession of the landowners by *agricultural artels*. The article ended with the words: "As for me, I shall direct my labour towards proving factually what a great force the *agricultural artel* is. My final word is: for the people and with the people."

This article by a Narodnik landowner elicited an exceedingly approving response from the *Kolokol* editors, as represented by Ogarev; for their part, they let it be understood that they were now renouncing those concessions which they had at one time made to the nobility for the sake of peaceful development. Ogarev now reasoned thus:

"If compensation is to be paid to the landowners out of the Zemstvo taxes for handing over the land to the peasants, and if all the land is handed over to the peasants in quit-rent estates, where no land was cultivated by the landowner in any case, then landowners should not be left any land in *corvée* estates either. They receive compensation—what more do they want? If they want to have a share in the communal land, on the taxed count, on a par with the peasants, let them stay in the commune as simple peasants like everybody else. Let the com-

munne possess all the land and let the landowner be a shareholder just as everybody else in the commune. Only then will the former landowners' peasants become equal to the former state peasants, and there will be a united peasantry and united peasant land."

Without exaggerating in the least one may say that Ogarev is expressing here the idea of the "*black redistribution*" which was later expressed in the revolutionary literature of the early eighties and which, in a certain sense, was in fact the people's idea. It goes without saying, however, that this people's idea (to be more precise, peasants' idea) was incompatible with the common sense of the more or less prominent landowners, however liberal-minded a certain section of them might be. I. S. Turgenev was by no means a reactionary, but the new programme of the *Kolokol* provoked his most sincere indignation.

"Our principal disagreement with O. and H...", he explained in one of his letters, "is precisely that they assume revolutionary or reformatory tendencies *in the people*, while despising and almost trampling into the mud the educated class in Russia; in fact, it is quite the opposite. The revolution in the genuine and living sense of the word (I could add: in the broadest sense of the word) exists *only* in the minority of the educated class, and that is sufficient for its triumph, provided we do not annihilate ourselves."\*

Here errors are mixed with truth in a most instructive manner. We now know very well that Herzen and Ogarev were by no means inclined to despise the educated nobility, still less to trample them into the mud. Let me recall the speech made by Herzen at the international meeting on February 27, 1854<sup>191</sup> to commemorate the February Revolution. In this speech he calls the young nobility one of the two "embryos" of the future Russian movement. Let me recall also that Ogarev advised the government to call to its assistance in the cause of peasant emancipation, which had only just begun at that time, "that section of the middle-class nobility which, on the one hand, has received an education at higher educational establishments and is accustomed to thinking, and, on the other hand, has lived in the country and knows the people and their needs". I. S. Turgenev was very mistaken in ascribing to Herzen and Ogarev a contempt for the educated class.

But at the same time he was quite right, from his point of view. The "educated class" could not fail to discover a contemptuous attitude towards it in Herzen and Ogarev's new programme. What is the crux of the matter here?

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\* *The Letters of K. Dm. Kavelin and Iv. S. Turgenev to Al. Iv. Herzen* (and some other persons.—G.P.). Foreign ed., p. 153.

The reader may remember the French comedy in which the father, having read the draft of a marriage contract prepared for his daughter and actually dictated by her, exclaims: "but this is all about my death!" (*mais dans tout cela il ne s'agit que de ma mort!*). That is precisely what the "educated class" might have exclaimed on familiarising itself with the new programme of the *Kolokol*: it was in fact all about its death. Well, he who wants the given class to die, does not, of course, have any respect for this class *as such*. I. S. Turgenev grasped this very well. Herzen and Ogarev's new programme could only be accepted by those representatives of the educated class who were ready to give up all their class privileges. And I. S. Turgenev belonged to the incomparably more numerous and influential part of it that was by no means inclined to give them up. Men like him approved of Herzen and Ogarev as long as they limited themselves to attacks on the privileges of the nobility as an *estate*, *serfdom* being at the time one of those privileges. But they were confused as soon as they saw that Herzen and Ogarev had begun to attack the *class* privilege of the nobility, i.e., their right to landownership. Disagreement here was inevitable, and it was certainly not caused by the fact that Ogarev had allegedly begun to take over at the *Kolokol*, but by the fact that he, just as Herzen, was actually an *incorrigible* socialist (taking the word "socialism" in its utopian sense), whereas the men who applauded the *Kolokol* in the first years of its existence were mainly liberals.

To this should be added Herzen's and Ogarev's approval of the Polish movement that was gaining strength then. On this question, too, the liberals could not fail to disagree with the "incorrigible socialists". The decline in the popularity of the *Kolokol* certainly pained Herzen. The causes for such a decline, however, were not clear to him.

In issue No. 135 of the *Kolokol* (June 1, 1862) he published an item under the caption "Moscow Does Not Sympathise with Us" with the ironic epigraph "Farewell, Moscow, my native home!" Here he is really saying farewell to Moscow; but his leave-taking shows what a strong utopian element there was in his conception of the nobility as the "embryo" of Russian socialism.

The item begins with an extract from a letter received by the *Kolokol* editors from their Moscow correspondent. "Moscow *does not sympathise with you*; on the contrary," the correspondent wrote, "all of us here, whatever the party we belong to, are men of *history*, and we cannot stomach radicalism. Do not imagine that I am speaking of one definite circle. No, I am speaking of everyone, with the exception, of course, of a small section of young men. The sincerity of your convictions, the usefulness of most of the

information reported by you are respected here, you are spoken of with nothing but love, but the sympathy does not go further than that."

Herzen answers this report with a series of acrimonious sarcasms aimed at Moscow. But the acrimonious sarcasms are only to cover up his disappointment, which bursts through in a bitter tirade:

"How it has changed since the thirties and the forties ... since those times when Belinsky began his literary career and Granovsky started his course!...

"Everything that developed and became apparent later, everything that is now the focus of opinions and personalities—all this was born on a dark Moscow night, by the light of a poor student's candle, during a friendly chat in a third-floor flat, in a friendly argument between young men and adolescents. Out of the vague mist of desires, out of grief and hope there emerged, little by little, like two wolf's eyes, two points of light, the two lights of a locomotive growing in size in full flight, throwing out long beams, one at the track behind, the other, at the track ahead. Moscow was the focus of intellectual initiative at that time, all vital questions were raised there, and the heart and the mind, all leisure and all existence were expended in solving them. Belinsky and Khomyakov developed in Moscow. In Moscow Granovsky's chair became the tribune of social protest."

By the beginning of the sixties Moscow had undoubtedly changed very much compared to the time when Herzen was a student at its university or when, on returning from exile, he gave battle to Khomyakov at Yelagina's soirées. But there never was a period in the life of Moscow when its so-called society saw the problems of Russian life through the eyes of the university circles. And it was quite natural that in the early sixties this society differed from the more progressive contemporary writers in their evaluation of the peasant reform and the Polish movement. To explain this difference by the fact that the mood of the society had changed would mean to have an erroneous conception of its mood in the thirties and forties. Herzen's lines quoted above evince such an erroneous conception. One may get the impression from what is said in these lines that the Moscow of the nobility, the Moscow of the good old times, had neglected its essential economic interests and had been ready, perhaps, to follow Belinsky; whereas by the beginning of the sixties it had changed so much that it remembered those interests and therefore refused to support the *Kolokol's* new agrarian demands. In actual fact "Moscow" (and, of course, not only "Moscow") did not want to support these demands for the quite sufficient reason that their implementation would mean the end of large-scale ownership of land.

Herzen and Ogarev hoped that the educated minority of the nobility would take it upon themselves to initiate the reforms needed for the development of the peasant commune along socialist lines. They believed that, being educated men, they would rise above their class interests. It turned out in reality that only a few individuals were able to rise above these interests. The rest of the nobility either stood by their *estate* privileges or, at best, in the case of the most progressive elements, gave up these privileges, but did not want to give up the economic advantages of their position *as a class*, i.e., to sacrifice their rights as landowners. This, of course, was only to be expected. I shall say more than that. Proceeding from theory to practice, that is, from elaborating their scheme for Russia's future social development to advocating emancipation of the peasants with land, Herzen and Ogarev themselves sensed immediately that, in appealing to the nobility, one had to spare, at any rate, their interests as land-holders. That is why they advocated *redemption* (and, as we have seen, a redemption that was by no means without profit for the nobility) of the lands that were in the possession of the peasants. But at the same time they continued to believe, by a fraction of consciousness, as it were, in the educated minority of the nobility. The clearer it became that the nobility was completely incapable of sacrificing its interests for the emancipation movement, the more the *Kolokol* publishers turned away from it, and the more they were inclined to reproach it for the discrepancy between its behaviour and those hopes which they had pinned on it in contrasting Russia with the West and in dreaming of the future bloom of Russian socialism. This seems incongruous. But we frequently encounter such incongruities in the history of utopian socialism. Utopian socialists in general expected and demanded much more from the propertied classes than the latter could give, and in this way set many disappointments in store for themselves. This was, of course, the result of excessive *idealisation* and not of *contempt* for the propertied classes.

## XIX

In May 1862 Ogarev wrote: "That part of the nobility which takes the side of the people should unite firmly with each other and with the peasants."\*

Here the author is still addressing the nobility. But in doing so he seems to yield, as it were, to an old ingrained habit. In announcing that the nobility must be on a par with other peasants if they want to have their share in the communal land,\*\*

\* *Kolokol*, No. 134.

\*\* This passage from his article is quoted above.

Ogarev could not have believed, of course, that there would be many supporters of such an agrarian programme among them. The *Kolokol* editors, however, saw clearly even then that the great majority of the reading public was not in favour of it. In the issue for January 1, 1864 Herzen replied as follows to the question of whether he had many supporters in Russia:

"No, not many, so far as we know, at any rate, particularly since the weak, the vacillating, the puny, the timid have gone—some out of fear, others out of stupidity; those who remain are all the more inconspicuous since they have to be silent under triple surveillance—of the open, secret and literary police."

But he was not daunted by the small numbers of his associates—he believed in the power of the idea. He wrote:

"What is needed is great faith, great devotion, great *truth*, and the numbers will come. This is not conscription and not taxation per head. Christians weak in numbers grew to a force in caves, in underground passages they formed indestructible communes of *holy madmen* that could be conquered neither by the wild barbarity of one world nor the venerable civilisation of the other."

In other words this could be expressed thus: "although we have very few associates now, there will be very many of them later". The question naturally arises as to what social milieu, in the opinion of the *Kolokol* editors, would yield their future numerous associates.

The hope for the "young nobility" was justified to a most insignificant degree. The peasantry, in Herzen and Ogarev's scheme, remained the passive object of the enlightened influence of the educated minority. What was left was an appeal to the *raznochintsi*.

In October 1864 Ogarev speaks at considerable length on the *raznochintsi* in his letter "To One of Many".

"They belong either to the minority of the nobility that have renounced their estate, or to *raznochintsi* who have not entered the civil service or remain civil servants with great reluctance. They cannot move ahead in any other way than by uniting in artels, not in theory but in real life, and by looking for support not to the cities but to the people, who give them [?—G. P.] the element of Zemstvo as the foundation, everywhere vital and ineradicable."

We see here that now the editors of the *Kolokol* are, indeed, appealing only to that tiny section of the nobility that was capable of abandoning the viewpoint of class interest. It stands to reason that the present-day conscious proletariat is ready to take *this* section of the nobility into its own ranks. But, if the theoretical representatives of the present-day conscious proletariat sometimes have to enumerate those social classes,



estates or strata whose individual members might take the side of the workers, they place the nobility well down on the list, whereas when Ogarev spoke of the constituent elements of the stratum of the *raznochintsi*, he pointed first of all to the minority of the nobility. To a large extent this is explained by the fact that in Russia at that time more noblemen were abandoning their class viewpoint than in any modern capitalist country. Besides, one has to reckon again with the old habit ingrained in the dear old memories.

In speaking of Herzen's student years, I have already mentioned that the progressive circles of that time consisted mainly of young *noblemen*. I quoted his own testimony to the effect that seminary graduates were backward elements in the student body. True, that time also produced such a *raznochinets* as V. G. Belinsky. But V. G. Belinsky was simply a most significant exception from the general rule. His appearance was indicative of what would come *after*, and not of what had been *before*. It is most remarkable that in the first period of his literary activity Belinsky himself was most distrustful of the *raznochintsi*. In his famous article "Literary Reveries" he refers to them in these words:

"This estate betrayed Peter the Great's hopes most of all: having had to pinch and scrape to get their education, they turned their Russian cleverness and sharpness to bad account, interpreting the edicts as they pleased; having learnt how to take a bow and to kiss ladies' hands, they did not forget how to perform with their noble hands ignoble executions."\*

This prejudice against the *raznochintsi* was due to their previous role as representatives of officialdom in the history of development of the Russian "civic spirit". It was dispelled only in the sixties, when the progressive representatives of this social stratum emerged at the head of the emancipation movement. But even then it was not dispelled at once; that was why the *Kolokol* editors, even when they addressed the *raznochintsi*, saw them first and foremost as young noblemen who had made a clean break with their "noble" estate.

Ogarev ascribed to the *raznochintsi* "the role of an intellectual and, consequently, motive force in the state".\*\* This, as you see, is the same role that Herzen and he had formerly ascribed to the "young nobility". It follows that in their opinion at the time the student youth still had a very significant role to play. Moreover, earlier, when Herzen believed in the government, he regarded the young and educated ideologists as the best executors of reforms initiated from above. The *Kolokol*

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\* *Works*, Vol. I, ed. by Pavlenkov, St. Petersburg, 1896, p. 23.

\*\* *Kolokol*, No. 190.

editors, through Ogarev, said so outright. Now that their faith in the government disappeared, Herzen and Ogarev expected the educated ideologists to take the initiative. Thus the student youth acquired even greater significance in their eyes. It is not surprising that, in connection with the student "unrest", Herzen wrote in issue No. 110 of the *Kolokol* the article "The Giant Is Awakening!" It is also quite understandable that his advice to students expelled from higher educational establishments for "unrest" is to go to the people.

"With the people! To the people! That is your place, refugees from scholarship; show ... that you will become not *petty officials*, but warriors ... of the Russian people."

At the same time the *Kolokol* (in issue No. 105) advises the setting up of secret printing presses. In a word, in the *Kolokol* of that time we find almost all the practical instructions which the Narodnik (revolutionary) press of the seventies issued to the student youth.

In March 1863, announcing the emergence in Russia of the Land and Freedom society,<sup>192</sup> the *Kolokol* editors add:

"Land and Freedom! These words are dear to us, it was with these words that we set out in the past, in the winter night of Nicholas' reign, and with them we ushered in the present day. 'Land and Freedom' was the foundation of each of our articles; 'Land and Freedom' was written on our banner abroad and on every sheet that appeared from our London printing press." The *Kolokol* editors had every right to write this. The "Land and Freedom" motto was indeed the foundation of each of their articles. Since that is so, Herzen and Ogarev should be recognised as the fathers of the Russian Narodnik movement. On the other hand, for this very reason they had to part ways with those liberal elements in Russian society that originally applauded the *Polyarnaya Zvezda* and the *Kolokol*. I have already said that, despite I. S. Turgenev's opinion, Herzen was just as much of a Narodnik as Ogarev. Today only someone with an extremely superficial view of Herzen could write such lines as these, for instance: "The fact that Ogarev's importance as a leader grew at the *Kolokol* (although his proclamations in the spirit of communal socialism did not reach the people, of course) estranged some of the supporters of the *Kolokol*."\* These supporters were estranged because of the very simple and now almost universally known fact that they, these supporters, only strove to abolish serfdom and to introduce certain "administrative" and "religious" reforms (remember Kavelin's letter); whereas Herzen viewed the abolition of serfdom merely as the first step to socialism.

It is also said that M. A. Bakunin, who appeared in London

\* Ch. Vetrinsky, *Herzen*, St. Petersburg, 1908, p. 363.

early in 1862, contributed much to the changes at the *Kolokol*. But already in 1861 strident Narodnik notes were becoming ever more discernible in the *Kolokol* articles. True, Herzen narrates that, on coming to London, Bakunin immediately started "revolutionising the 'Kolokol'".\* But what did he want from this publication?

"Propaganda was not enough; one had to have a supplement, without fail; one had to organise centres and committees; it was not enough to have men that were close or remote, one had to have 'the initiated and the semi-initiated brothers', a regional organisation: a Slavic organisation, a Polish organisation. B. found us moderate, incapable of exploiting the situation at that moment, insufficiently inclined towards decisive measures."\*\*

It is clear from this testimony by Herzen, first of all, that disagreement between Bakunin and the *Kolokol* editors was a matter of tactics and not of principle, as we would now say. It also shows that Bakunin attacked both editors of the *Kolokol* equally. It is quite possible that Ogarev made more practical concessions to Bakunin than Herzen did. His concessions may have brought about certain changes in Herzen's behaviour, too. I am quite prepared to concede that no concessions should have been made to Bakunin. But whatever the errors may have been that resulted from unnecessary concessions, they were limited to the practical field and could have no effect at all on Herzen's theoretical views. It is a well-known fact that on June 15, 1862 a supplement to the *Kolokol* began to appear called the *Obshcheye Veche*,<sup>193</sup> which was intended for the dissenters. Some regard this "undertaking" as an instance of Bakunin's harmful influence on the *Kolokol* editors. Mr. Vetrinsky says:

"Not only the idea that the Old Believers could in themselves be a revolutionary force was erroneous here; the position of the editors was also false. Concealing their actual non-religious beliefs, the editors assumed the position of men believing in Holy Writ and in legend, just as Engelsson did earlier in his *Visions of Condratius*, and looked to them for support of their convictions, political and social."\*\*\*

That is indeed so: by talking the language of believers, the non-believing editors placed themselves in a false position. It is also true that the Old Believers could not be a revolutionary force. But Engelsson's *Visions of Condratius* appeared at the time when Herzen was just commencing his publishing activities and neither Bakunin nor even Ogarev were in London. The error of publishing these *Visions* must therefore be attributed to Herzen himself. And

\* Italics his.

\*\* «Сборник посмертных статей», стр. 200. [*A Collection of Posthumous Articles*, p. 200.]

\*\*\* Ch. Vetrinsky, *Herzen*, p. 364.

this error is very simply explained, first, by the fact that he loathed the role of censor, and, second (and this may be even more important), by his lack of belief in the ability of the people to understand serious political language. In concluding Chapter VIII, I asked the reader to remember the words entered in Herzen's diary on March 24, 1844: "So far it has only been possible to talk to the people through Holy Writ." The reader may see now that he did well indeed to remember them and that Mr. Vetrinsky should not have forgotten them.

## XX

Mr. Vetrinsky quotes, among other things, the following passage from Herzen's letter to Ogarev of April 29, 1863:

"We represent (and I am deeply convinced of it) the active ferment of the Russian movement, and the movement we are producing is identical in all internal questions. I believe in our strength, but I do not believe it possible to give birth to a child after six months of pregnancy. And Russia seems to be in the sixth month. I get carried away sooner than you do, and I sober up sooner, too. Do not give me a ready force, let me feel the *living embryo*. Of course, the living embryo is in the general condition, in the genius of the people, in the trend of the literature, in reforms, etc. But where else has it formed itself and become autonomous as ... you see it in the 'Land and Freedom'? I do not see that.... Has it never occurred to you that, after all that has happened since the Crimean War, what Russia needs most is to come to her senses, and to do that she needs restful, profound, genuine *preaching*? You are capable of it. Preaching may produce agitation, but it is not agitation. That is why I sometimes objected to your agitation articles."\*

Mr. Vetrinsky does not notice that this passage refutes his view. There is not a word in it about disagreement in principle between Herzen and Ogarev. Herzen admits that he sometimes had to object to Ogarev's articles. But it is also from him that we learn that the subject of the argument was the question: what is more necessary at the present time—propaganda or agitation? There was no discussion of what the content of that propaganda might be, for the simple reason that here, in the field of general socio-political views, there was no disagreement between Herzen and Ogarev at all. And propaganda of these general socio-political views (i.e., mainly of the view that the emancipation of the peasants with land had to be the first link in the chain of socialist measures needed for Russia's correct development) was quite enough to frighten away Herzen's liberal admirers.

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\* Ch. Vetrinsky, *Herzen*, pp. 362-63.

"The movement we are producing is identical in all the internal questions," says Herzen. These words alone show that there was no disagreement in principle between him and Ogarev. But, if two persons want to produce "identical movement" in a given object, it does not follow that they agree completely on the question of what the *speed* of the movement produced by them will be. It is quite possible that there will be disagreement between them caused by what is usually termed temperament. One man may be more prone to enthusiasm than another; one man may believe whole-heartedly, whereas another man's faith may be weakened by doubt. Such things happen all the time, and we see all this in the case under consideration. Herzen said that Russia was in the sixth month of pregnancy, whereas to Ogarev it sometimes seemed that the pregnancy was nearing its natural conclusion and that labour would soon begin. In his "Reply to a Reply to the *Velikoruss*" he predicts even the time of the people's outburst: in his opinion, "in all probability it will happen in the sixth year".\* One may say with complete confidence that such a "probability" never seemed in any degree significant to Herzen. However, one should not exaggerate things here, either. With all his tendency towards enthusiasm, Ogarev never went as far as preaching "pyrotechnics", which later, as is well known, became the basis of Bakunin's tactics and to which he was always very much inclined. To characterise Ogarev's tactical views, I shall cite his article "Sins and Madness" in issue No. 17 of the *Obshcheye Veche* (for June 1, 1863).

"We do not want a chaotic explosion or bloodshed needlessly," he says there; "we want the people to gather gradually into solid and reasonable ranks, and we want the people to rise in a body to convene the Zemsky Sobor for allotting land to the people, for setting up people's elected courts of law and administration in Russia, for declaring freedom of faith and consolidating a social order that respects man's conscience and will."

In view of all these reservations Herzen had no difficulty in reaching agreement with Ogarev despite their disagreement as to the "month of pregnancy".

Of much greater significance is another aspect of the matter, entirely neglected by Mr. Vetrinsky.

Herzen and Ogarev were at one time admirers of Hegel's philosophy, and each of them owed it a great deal, as far as the development of their world outlook is concerned. But I shall hardly be mistaken in saying that Herzen had greater success than Ogarev as the great German idealist's student. True, he did not assimilate everything in Hegel's school that was assimilated by such

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\* After the emancipation of the peasants. The article by Ogarev quoted here appeared in No. 108 of the *Kolokol*, November 1, 1861.

people as Feuerbach, Marx or Engels. He underestimated the dialectical aspect of Hegel's philosophy.\* Everything suggests, however, that he paid much more attention to it than Ogarev. This had an effect on his attitude to contemporary socialism. To acquire a firm belief in the future triumph of socialism, it was not enough for him to believe that socialism was a splendid ideal of good people. He wanted to get a clear picture of the course of social development which led to the emergence of this splendid ideal and would guarantee its realisation. He himself was not fully aware of this theoretical need of his.\*\* Its existence, however, left a deep imprint on all his reasoning concerning socialism in general and the chances of socialism in Western Europe in particular. Already before the February Revolution he conversed with Bakunin about the possible death of the "old man" of the West, but his scepticism was in this case caused, among other things, by the fact that the West-European socialist ideal seemed to him merely an attractive theory, which had no serious foundation in the logic of social life.\*\*\* If, on the other hand, he came to regard Russia as the country called upon to realise the West-European socialist ideal, that happened only because the Russian commune appeared to him capable of playing the historical role of the objective foundation of socialism, a foundation which did not exist, in his view, in the West.

It stands to reason, however, that the Russian commune could play this role of the foundation (or, as Herzen put it, "the embryo") of socialism only under certain socio-political conditions necessary for its further development (as our author understood it). The absence of such conditions threatened "the embryo" with extinction. Herzen sensed this, and that was why he defended with special gusto the idea of emancipating the peasants with land. However, when the peasant reform took a turn which the *Kolokol* called abnormal, one could not help seeing that the conditions for the further development of the embryo became extremely unpropitious. And those were quite sufficient logical grounds for questioning whether "the embryo" was destined to survive at all. It is a well-known fact that since the appearance of Marxism in Russian literature it has devoted much attention to the question. But there are grounds for believing that Herzen also asked himself the same question.

In the autumn of 1863 our author wrote in the Letter from Na-

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\* He characterised Hegel's philosophy as the "algebra of revolution". This is a splendid characterisation. But he also regarded Proudhon as an excellent dialectician. This shows that the real essence of Hegel's dialectical method was not clear to him.

\*\* Had he been fully aware of it, he would have set for himself the same theoretical task that was later solved by Marx.

\*\*\* For details see my article "Herzen in Emigration".

ples: "Seeing that here, in the absence of a strong bourgeoisie, the rabble of the capital remain lazzaroni, one is compelled to think that the people, according to the severe law of selection, rise to a more advanced life only through the bourgeois stage."

The same idea had occurred to Belinsky already early in 1848. But, holding the Western "petty bourgeoisie" in profound contempt, Herzen could not solve this question in the same optimistic spirit as Belinsky did. The following pessimistic arguments compelled him to accept the conclusion that modern civilised peoples will have to pass through a bourgeois stage:

"It may be that the bourgeoisie is in general the *limit* of historical development; those who have outrun the others return to it, those lagging behind advance to it, in it the peoples rest from thrashing about, from national growth, from heroic deeds and youthful ideals, people live comfortably in its cosy attics."

Here the bourgeois stage of development is presented not as a transition to a new and higher stage (the sense in which Belinsky understood it), but as a halt in movement, a limit not to be transcended by the civilised humanity.

It is not surprising that Herzen found it difficult to believe in the existence of such a limit. But his studies in Hegelian logic did him a good turn here: he understood that the logic of social life is indifferent to what is pleasant or unpleasant to the ideologists. "...Do we not all have sorrows like this?" says he. "Did not the alchemists mourn the prose of technology, and are there not enough ideals for which we long?"\*

This argument repeats almost literally the idea which lies at the base of the book *From Another Shore*. This whole book is nothing but a long series of graphic and profoundly emotional proofs of the thesis that our longing for the ideal is one thing and the objective necessity of its realisation quite another.

## XXI

Mark that the theoretical propositions with which Herzen operates here are of a general nature. The discussion does not relate to a single country or even a single part of the world. No, the sight of the Neapolitan lazzaroni "compels" Herzen to assume a "severe law" of selection according to which peoples can advance to a higher stage of development "only through the bourgeois stage". No exceptions from this sad general rule are mentioned in the formulation of this law.

However, if that is so, if this general law really exists, Russia would obviously have to conform to it. And in that case the con-

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\* "From the Continent", A Letter from Naples, *Kolokol*, No. 173.

trast between Russia and the West, made by Herzen and not very comforting for him, loses all meaning. Our author is not strong enough to accept this conclusion. He rejects it in a short but extremely noteworthy reservation. He gives the law a new form by accepting the probability that all the rivers of history are lost in the swamp of philistinism. But here he adds unexpectedly: at any rate, the Western ones. This reservation has no foundation in his previous reasoning. Moreover, it *contradicts* this reasoning. But it saves from destruction the hope, frequently expressed by Herzen on other occasions, that Russia will never be philistine, and it therefore seems convincing to him.

This slight reservation, together with the hope mentioned here, also saved the whole of the *Kolokol* programme. Without it Herzen would have had to elaborate quite a different programme or become a complete pessimist. But the very fact that he avoided pessimism only with the aid of such reservations gives one grounds for thinking that his view of Russia as a fortunate exception to the general historical rule was not always free from a certain measure of scepticism. Ogarev was luckier in this respect: it is hardly possible that he should have had any doubts. The issue of the *Kolokol* immediately preceding the one in which Herzen published his Letter from Naples contains a characteristic poem by Ogarev "With This Thou Shalt Win!" It expresses the author's unshakeable faith in the happy future of Russian socialism:

*"And I believe in suffering's end,  
And in our radiant salvation,  
And in the folk who own the land  
And in the younger generation.  
And I believe that there draws nigh  
A very different destiny,  
And that a strong hand holds on high  
One banner—Land and Freedom!"\**

If the historical significance of writers were determined by the strength of their belief in certain ideas, one would have had to say that Ogarev had more right than Herzen to be called the father of the Russian Narodnik movement. But the Narodnik movement has a theory of its own, and Herzen did much more than Ogarev for the elaboration of that theory.

Ogarev, I repeat, dealt mainly with individual questions. In working on such problems, however, he frequently anticipated, in a remarkable manner, those solutions at which the Narodniks of the seventies arrived. Here is one of the numerous graphic examples. The idea of the need for propaganda work among dissenters, which Ogarev realised through the *Obshcheye Veche*, became gen-

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\* *Kolokol*, November 1, 1863.



erally accepted among Russian revolutionaries fifteen years later. Ogarev, who tried to prove the necessity of abolishing ownership of land by references to the prophet Daniel,\* anticipates the appearance of Alexander Mikhailov and other Narodniks, who attempted to instill their views in the dissenters of the Spas and Fedoseyev persuasions by references to the "old books".\*\*

Who is not aware that there were many unpleasant encounters between Herzen and the young revolutionaries who went abroad in the sixties? Their main reproach against him was *his backwardness*. Just how unjustified this reproach was is clear from the simple fact that the young men who rebelled against Herzen often lived by his ideas and (a remarkable thing!) assimilated them more and more as the movement under the banner of "Russian socialism" grew.

There were genuine disagreements on matters of tactics, but these concerned mainly the determining of the "month of pregnancy". Although Herzen consciously preferred the peaceful course of development to the revolutionary one, even he would not have objected to the activity of the obstetricians, had the time of labour really come.

The young revolutionaries also did not like Herzen's disapproval of the tactics of assassination or *terror*, as it was called later. But this is a minor point which need not be discussed here. It will be more appropriate to note that, in rebelling against Herzen, the young revolutionaries merely magnified an error that had crept into his own philosophy of Russian history.

According to this philosophy, our development in the direction of socialism would be the result of interaction between two "embryos": the peasant commune and the circles of educated young men (noblemen and, later, *raznochintsi*). The circles of educated young men were to play an entirely *active* role. They were to end the somnolence of the other "embryo" and lend it an impetus which would be the starting point of its further development. However, once one admitted that the setting of the other "embryo" (the commune) on the path of historical development depended on the

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\* See "Letter to Members of All Old Believers' and Other Persuasions and the Sons of the Established Church" in the issue of the *Obshcheye Veché* for June 15, 1862.

\*\* In his "Private Letters on General Questions" Ogarev develops the thesis that "the idea of the ownership of a thing by the people" was alien to the mediaeval West, and says that only in Italy did the townsmen arrive at "the idea of the people's will" (*Kolokol*, No. 216, the second letter). This expression makes one recall the Russian party that later became famous—Narodnaya Volya.<sup>194</sup> I know very well that this party did not assume the name under the influence of Ogarev's articles. But it is interesting to note that it designated the political concept of democracy by the very same words as Ogarev did. The Narodnaya Volya party, as the reader knows, was a modification of the Russian Narodnik movement.

circles of educated young men, it seemed quite natural to admit that the greater or lesser speed of this development also depended on them. Herzen said: "The existence of the commune is a guarantee of the realisability of the socialist ideal in Russia. Therefore—go to the people for socialist propaganda." And the revolutionary young men who quarrelled with him and called him backward said: "The hard lot of the peasant of the commune causes him to be discontented, which is a guarantee of the speedy realisation of our revolutionary aspirations. Therefore—go to the people for revolutionary agitation." The young men were mistaken, for the communal peasant's discontent with his hard lot had not yet made him a revolutionary. Yet Herzen was wrong, too, for our commune was by no means an embryo of socialism. From the logical point of view the young men's mistake was quite similar to the one made by Herzen in elaborating the philosophy of Russian history. The former complemented the latter and, one may say, was caused by it.

I said that Herzen's ideas took root among the Russian revolutionaries as the movement under the banner of "Russian socialism" grew in scope and consolidated. It was precisely the seventies that were the heyday of this socialism. At the time of the publication of the *Kolokol*, however, the influence of Herzen and Ogarev on the young revolutionaries was weakened by Chernyshevsky's influence on them. We already know that the publishers of this paper regarded the latter as a *Westerner*, whose socialism was meant exclusively for the towns. The sensational success of Chernyshevsky's propaganda could not fail to arouse a certain apprehension on their part. This is how Ogarev expressed that apprehension:

"I am afraid to encounter in our socialists a shifting into the foreground of the urban educated proletariat exclusively and placing it at the centre of all social tendencies, turning it into a kind of estate, which can only result in an association without a material foundation and in an impossible struggle with all the tendencies of the other, firmly established, urban estates. And this at a time when there exists in Russia an historical foundation for an agrarian system based on common ownership of the land, a system with which the educated urban proletariat, the educated minority must join sides!"\*

Note that Ogarev is speaking here exclusively of "the urban educated proletariat". That is what the intelligentsia was called at the time (and for a long time afterwards). Ogarev was quite right in insisting that "the educated minority" must leave the narrow confines of their circles and merge with the people. By "the people", however, he means only the peasants. It does not enter his head even that "the educated minority" could meet, and should meet, the industrial proletariat in the towns. The indus-

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\* The third Letter on General Questions, *Kolokol*, No. 220

trial proletariat simply has no place in his reasoning. The Narodniks of the seventies could no longer forget that there were workers in the proper sense of the word in the towns. In their view, however, urban workers were no more than peasants spoilt by the "civilisation of the low taverns". Here they made the same kind of mistake as the *Kolokol* publishers did.

However, it is time to finish. After all that has been said the reader will not, I hope, reject the following conclusions:

1) Herzen's sympathy for the people's sorry plight was due to the influence of the long-suffering domestic serfs.

2) Herzen wanted the emancipation of the peasants to be the first step on the path of Russia's socialist development.

3) In determining the preferable path of this development, he acted as the father of the Narodnik movement.

4) This was quite enough for the liberal elements of the Russian society, who at first greeted warmly the appearance of the *Polyarnaya Zvezda* and the *Kolokol*, to gradually withdraw their support.

5) There were no essential differences between Herzen and Ogarev in their view of the peasant reform and of Russian socialism.

6) The young revolutionaries who disagreed with Herzen lived, to a considerable extent and for a very long time, by his ideas, and were all the more dominated by them, the more their movement assumed a Narodnik colouring.

7) In their *tactical* judgments, which led them to breakaway from Herzen, the young revolutionaries made a *logical* mistake which was very similar to the one which is responsible for his view of Russia as a country which could realise the socialist ideal in an original way, different from the path of West-European social development.

## A. I. HERZEN'S PHILOSOPHICAL VIEWS<sup>195</sup>

(On the occasion of his centenary)

[1912]

Everyone knows now that A. I. Herzen was a man of great learning and that philosophy, among other things, formed part of his intellectual interests. However, *the mode* of the development of his philosophical views and *the main trend* of this development have not been elucidated up to the present. I believe that it will be worthwhile to do so, and I shall make such an attempt.

### I

In his youth A. I. Herzen did not study *philosophy*: he was more attracted to *politics*. On his return to Moscow from his first exile, however, he realised the need for accumulating a solid stock of philosophical knowledge. That was the time, a most remarkable one in respect of theory, when V. G. Belinsky and his closest associates advocated reconciliation with contemporary "Russian reality" on the strength of the thesis that "all that is real is rational".\* As a "politician", Herzen could not help rebelling against this conclusion and, as he puts it in *My Past and Thoughts*, "a desperate struggle flared up between us". But his political arguments made no impression whatsoever on his opponents who had their feet planted firmly in Hegelian philosophy. That was the reason why he deemed it necessary to arm himself with philosophy.

He continued: "In the heat of this internecine strife I saw the need to *ex ipso fonte bibere*\*\* and started in earnest on Hegel. I even think that a man is not complete, is not modern, unless he *has lived through* Hegel's *Phenomenology*\*\*\* and Proudhon's *Contradictions of Social Economy*\*\*\*\*, unless he has been tempered in this crucible."

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\* On the significance of that epoch in the development of Belinsky's views see my article "Belinsky and Rational Reality" in the symposium *Twenty Years*.<sup>196</sup>

\*\* [drink from the fountain itself]

\*\*\* [*Die Phänomenologie des Geistes*.]

\*\*\*\* [*Contradictions Économiques*.]

Note that here Proudhon is put on a level with Hegel. This is most characteristic of Herzen's philosophical views. Without fear of exaggeration one may say that this comparison signifies the limit beyond which our extremely gifted and exceedingly brilliant author did not go in understanding Hegel. Moreover, we have every right to add that, had Herzen gone beyond this limit, he would not perhaps have had to endure the fearful spiritual tragedy which makes itself felt on every page of his famous book, *From Another Shore*. Lest these assertions seem unsubstantiated to the reader, one should take careful stock of all that Herzen found in Hegel and all that he borrowed from him.

Let us turn to his diary. Here we come across passages such as this: "Have been reading Hegel's philosophy of nature. (*Encyclopädie*, II Th.) A giant in all, much is only lightly sketched or traced, but the breadth and the volume is colossal [should it be "are colossal"?—G. P.]. What a great stride forward in getting free from abstract forces, in setting strict confines for the category of quantity that was used to crush everything on earth, and what bias towards quality and concreteness. He liberates man in his full development from his material definition, from his tellurian life through the adequacy of his form to the concept (the poorer his development, the greater his dependence on nature). The spirit is eternal, and matter is the eternal form of its other-being. It is only form that is capable of expressing the spirit, that can and does express the spirit."\*

Or this: "Nothing can be funnier than that up to the present the Germans, and all sorts of people after them, believe Hegel to be a dry logician, an arid dialectician of the Wolff type,\*\* whereas each of his writings is imbued with mighty poetry, whereas he clothes most speculative thoughts in striking images of stupendous accuracy, carried away by his genius—often against his will. And what power of divesting things of their integuments through thinking, what a lightning eye that penetrates everywhere and sees everything wherever it is turned."\*\*\*

These passages show, first, that Herzen was very far from that disdainful attitude towards Hegel of which many more or less free-thinking persons were guilty later on in Russia. This aspect, however, would seem to be sufficiently clear to us from the above quotation from *My Past and Thoughts*. It will be more worthwhile to dwell on another aspect, namely on Herzen's exposition of the basic theorem of Hegel's philosophy: "The spirit is eternal, and matter is the eternal form of its other-being." In no way does

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\* A. I. Herzen, *Works*, Geneva edition, Vol. I, p. 193.

\*\* Properly speaking, Wolff has never been a *dialectician*—at most a *logician*. Logic in the ordinary sense of the word stands in the same relation to dialectics as lower mathematics does to higher mathematics.

\*\*\* *Works*, Vol. I, pp. 234-35.

Herzen express his critical attitude towards this theorem, and he was never shy of criticising even Hegel "the giant" when he disagreed with him. What does this show? The fact that in April 1844\* Herzen himself still held the views of Hegelian idealism or, at any rate, had not yet formulated even to himself his doubts about it. We are also driven to the same conclusion by the following lines that are very close to those which interest us now.

"Of course, as regards natural sciences, Hegel provided a huge framework rather than performed, but the coup de grâce to the natural sciences in their present state has been delivered. It does not matter whether scholars admit this or not, the obtuse *Vornehmthuerei des Ignorierens*\*\* does not mean anything. Hegel developed clearly the requirement of natural science and showed clearly the pitiable confusion in physics and chemistry without negating, of course, their individual successes. He made the first attempt to understand the life of nature in its dialectical development from matter that finds its self-determination as a planet, to individualisation as a certain body, to subjectivity, without introducing any agency other than the logical movement of the concept. Schelling anticipated him, but Schelling did not satisfy the requirements of science."\*\*\*

The fact that Hegel tried to explain the dialectical development of the life of nature without having recourse to any "agency" other than the logical movement of the concept is the weakest point of his natural philosophy, which fully explains most of the other slips he made in this field. This hardly needs to be explained today, as even the idealistically minded natural scientists (and they are unfortunately, quite numerous now too) find it absolutely impossible to explain the world process by the logical movement of the concept and do not view this explanation as "satisfying the requirements of science" at all. Not only does Herzen fail to point out this basic error in Hegel—he seems to regard it, on the contrary, as a great scholarly achievement. This could only happen because he himself remained an *idealist*, that is, because to him a reference to such an "agency" as the logical movement of the concept appeared to be a satisfactory explanation of the natural-historical process. True, already on June 20<sup>1847</sup> of the same year he wrote down in his diary some lines the content of which seems to be in sharp contradiction to what I have just said. They concern Jordan's article on the relation of universal science to philosophy.<sup>198</sup> This article appeared in Wigand's *Quarterly* and seems to have made a strong impression on Herzen. He

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\* The exposition of Hegel's view of nature as the spirit's other-being in Herzen's *Diary* is dated April 14 of the year in question.

\*\* [supercilious ignoring]

\*\*\* *Works*, Vol. I, p. 194. Entry on April 19, 1844.

calls it very remarkable and expresses its main idea in these words:

"Criticism that has cast off religion, and stands on philosophical ground, must go further and turn against philosophy itself. The philosophical view is the ultimate theological view, that subjugates nature to spirit in everything, that presumes thought to be the prius,\* and essentially fails to eliminate the antithesis between thinking and being by its identity. Spirit and thought are the results of matter and history. In presuming pure thought to be the primary source, philosophy lapses into abstractions complemented by the impossibility of holding on to them; the concrete conception is continuously inherent; we feel tormented and depressed in the sphere of abstraction—and we keep falling into other abstractions. Philosophy wants to be a separate science, the science of thinking."\*\* This is followed in the diary by a text in German which is indeed extremely noteworthy and is therefore translated here in full:

"Therefore (i.e., because philosophy wants to be the science of thinking) it wants at the same time to be the science of the world, as the laws of thought are the same as world laws. This must first of all be arranged in reverse order: thought is nothing but the world, inasmuch as the world cognises itself, thought is the world that in man becomes clear to itself." Then Herzen goes on in Russian: "And that is why one cannot begin with the science of thinking and deduce nature from it. Philosophy is not a separate science, it must be supplanted by a union of all the sciences that are now disunited."\*\*\*

If we assume that Herzen fully agrees with Jordan,\*\*\*\* we shall inevitably have to acknowledge that he has already parted with idealism: Jordan's view is in direct opposition to that of Hegel,\*\*\*\*\* and one cannot regard spirit and thought as the results of matter and history and at the same time consider the logical concept to be the main "agency" of the world process. Having made this assumption, however, we shall also have to admit that Herzen's transition from one of these two viewpoints to the other took place in the interval of time between April 14 and June 20, 1844; had it occurred *earlier*, the aforementioned favourable and quite un-

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\* [primary]

\*\* *Works*, Vol. I, pp. 208-09.

\*\*\* Wilhelm Jordan's article was published in the first volume of Wigand's *Quarterly* (*Wigand's Vierteljahrsschrift*). This volume appeared in May 1844 and was read by Herzen in June of the same year. This goes to show how well our author kept up with the philosophical literature in Germany.

\*\*\*\* *Works*, Vol. I, p. 209.

\*\*\*\*\* Wilhelm Jordan adhered to Feuerbach's viewpoint. Some even called him the latter's most faithful disciple in philosophy (cf. the article by Fr. Schmidt, "Die deutsche Philosophie in ihrer Entwicklung zum Sozialismus" in the *Deutsches Bürgerbuch für 1846*, Zweiter Jahrgang, S. 71).

E

Философскіе взгляды А. И.  
Герцена.

(къ свидѣній со дня  
его рожденія.)

А. И. Герценъ говоритъ, что  
на людей свѣсится урожай,  
какъ на вино. Неудъ не сама  
сирѣчь съ нимъ въ этомъ, если  
природники, какой прекра-  
сной урожай на людей разуме-  
ется, соборъ эдакъ "сорто-  
васть гововъ" <sup>въ</sup> немаломъ ч  
наеъ, но и въ Терманий.  
Восмоледно вендиннѣ Гинин-  
скаго и Герцена, Меркса и  
Энгельса, философскими  
взглядами одного изъ этихъ  
замечательнѣеъ людей

Page one of the autograph A. I. Herzen's *Philosophical Views*

critical attitude of our author to the fundamental thesis of Hegel's idealist natural philosophy would remain completely incomprehensible. Of course, this assumption considered in itself contains nothing impossible: why should not Herzen part with absolute idealism at that particular time, the spring of 1844? But there are facts inconsistent with this assumption.



## II

First, in the same *diary and after the time indicated* we come across further evidence of Herzen's considerable attachment to idealism. On August 9 of the same year, expounding Leibnitz's teaching (according to Feuerbach, note!), he commends Leibnitz highly for approaching the "*concept*": "the monad is in a certain sense the concept".\* But what concept? The one discussed in Hegel's logic. Clearly, this praise could only be penned by someone who had by no means overcome yet the influence of Hegelianism. And here is something that is perhaps even more convincing. At the end of the same month reading Rosenkranz's biography of Hegel,<sup>100</sup> Herzen picks out a particular passage in the *original* sketch of Hegelian natural philosophy and discourses on the subject in this manner:

"That essay on natural philosophy contains a remarkable passage on the structure of the globe; he [i.e., Hegel.—*G. P.*] viewed ... its disintegration as the result of the unconditional past whose dumb representatives they [i.e., the products of the disintegration of the globe.—*G. P.*] have remained; they now stand indifferently side by side, having lost their relationship, as if struck by paralysis. This idea is extremely significant; can we not expect from this the solution of the problem of why and how planetary matter appeared as simple bodies; what compelled [it] to combine in certain types of rock, was it not an experiment in the entire planet living as plants do—an experiment in living as a whole surface?"\*\* It goes without saying that such problems ("conundrums") could only arise in the head of an idealist.

Second, the famous *Letters Concerning the Study of Nature*, which some of our historians of literature naively view as a kind of "realistic" manifesto by Herzen, prove indisputably that their author was strongly influenced by idealism—Hegelian idealism, to be precise. Of course, they also contain lines and even whole pages full of "realistic" (let us keep the term for the present) content. For instance: "Hegel wanted nature and history as *applied logic*, and not logic as the abstract rationality of nature and history. That is the reason why empirical science remained indifferently deaf both to Hegel's encyclopaedia and to Schelling's dissertations."\*\*\* Here we have the very same reproach that was much later hurled at Hegel by the materialist Engels. Another passage: "Undoubtedly, Hegel raised thought to such heights that it is impossible after him to take a step without leaving idealism far behind."\*\*\*\* This, too, sounds quite realistic. No less "realistic" are the follow-

\* *Works*, Vol. I, p. 223.

\*\* *Ibid.*, p. 229.

\*\*\* *Works*, Vol. II, p. 72. Italics as in the original.

\*\*\*\* *Ibid.*, p. 72.

ing lines: "Idealism has always had something unbearably impudent about it: the man who has convinced himself that nature is rubbish, that all things temporary are not worthy of his attention, becomes proud, relentless in his one-sidedness and quite inaccessible to the truth. Idealism was superciliously convinced that all it had to do was to utter some scornful phrase about empiricism, and the latter would fall into dust; the metaphysicians' exalted natures were mistaken," etc.\* Having read this passage, anyone might say: "The author of the *Letters Concerning the Study of Nature* was a firm opponent of idealism; his viewpoint was the opposite of that of idealism." But that would be a mistake or, as our author was wont to say, *not the whole truth*. Not by far! What is said in the last passage quoted about idealism is *actually directed against subjective idealism*. And we know from the history of philosophy that one may attack it without leaving idealistic ground at all: this is well demonstrated by the self-same Hegel or Schelling, who rejected the *subjective* idealism of Fichte. The remark that after Hegel it is impossible to take a step forward in the philosophy of nature without leaving the ground of idealism seems to be levelled not only against *subjective* idealism, but also against Hegel's *absolutely* idealist philosophy. However, in the *Letters Concerning the Study of Nature* this remark is accompanied by the following significant reservation: "But this step has not been taken, and empiricism is coolly awaiting it; yet, if it waits long enough, just see what new life will permeate all the abstract spheres of human knowledge!"\*\* You see: the step that would release the thinking of natural scientists from the limitations of empiricism *has not yet been taken*, in Herzen's opinion. This opinion was wrong: Western philosophy in the person of Feuerbach *had by then left the ground of idealism*. However, whether right or wrong, it was bound to determine, in any case, the theoretical task of the author of the *Letters*: if the step that was necessary for science had not been taken, Herzen himself was obliged to attempt it. The question then arises: did he succeed? Anyone familiar with the state of philosophy at the time will answer in the negative, if he undertakes the pleasant task of reading carefully the *Letters Concerning the Study of Nature*.

Herzen gropes his way in them. From time to time he happens to set foot on solid "realistic" ground; but more frequently he sets it on the very ground of idealism which he finds it necessary to abandon. In the final analysis, even his perfectly correct statements against idealists acquire the much narrower meaning,

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\* Ibid., p. 41.

\*\* *Works*, Vol. II, pp. 72-73.

noted above, of critical sallies against the adherents of subjective idealism. When Herzen levels at Hegel the entirely justified charge of viewing nature and history as applied logic, it seems indisputable that our author sees quite clearly wherein lies the original sin of absolute idealism. But this impression is dispelled when one encounters passages like the following: "The organic process must inevitably develop in the animal a circulatory system, a nervous system, etc., according to an apparently pre-existing generic concept that is being realised."\* This thought, which takes us back to the "concept", is a step not beyond Hegel's idealism but straight into its very core, as it were. And ideas like this one abound in the *Letters Concerning the Study of Nature*. Each time their author attempts a critique of *materialism*, he reasons as a staunch *idealist*. Here are some examples.

In criticising Epicurus' materialism, Herzen speaks of "the supreme element reigning over physical diversity"\*\*\*; the limitation of the materialist outlook, in his opinion, lies in its rejection of the existence of such an element. To recognise its existence, however, means to be firmly implanted on idealist soil. Thus, the materialists were guilty, according to Herzen, of rejecting the idealist view of "physical diversity", i.e., the material world. It never occurs to him that, having recognised the existence of "the element reigning over physical diversity", one may, remaining quite true to one's beliefs, *take the view of nature as applied logic*. Further, he reproaches the eighteenth-century French materialists for failing to understand the unity of being and thinking. He says: "In their writings being and thinking either fall asunder or act upon each other externally. *Nature apart from thought is a part and not the whole*; thought is just as natural as extension, a degree of development just as mechanism, chemism, and organic structure—only of a higher kind. The materialists could not understand this simple idea; they believed that nature without man is complete, closed and self-contained, that man is a kind of outsider."\*\*\* This reproach is all the more strange because Herzen seems to have read Holbach's *Système de la nature* and ought to have remembered the insistence with which the idea of the unity of being and thinking is expounded there. Neither Holbach nor any of the other members of the materialist circle who expressed their views in the *System of Nature* ever thought of viewing man as an *outsider* in nature or ever rejected the idea that nature "apart from thought (that is, to put it more precisely, apart from the so-called psychical phenomena in general) is not the whole

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\* *Works*, *ibid.*, p. 275.

\*\* *Works*, Vol. II, p. 171.

\*\*\* *Ibid.*, p. 282.

but only a part". One of the main arguments used by the French materialists against the spiritualists was precisely that the "spirit" could not be regarded as an independent element opposing nature and reigning over it. In the materialists' view matter was by no means the dead body that Descartes declared it to be. Why did Herzen impute to them a mistake which they never made? There was an obvious misunderstanding here. But how did it arise?

### III

To answer this question, one has to consider the following words of our author: "Schelling found the struggle between the different views of reason and nature in its highest and most extreme expression when, on the one hand, the "non-I" succumbed under Fichte's attacks and the power of reason was declared to exist in some infinite expanses of cold and vacuum; on the other, the French rejected everything non-sensuous and, like phrenologists, sought to interpret thought in terms of protuberances and depressions and not protuberances in terms of thought, and he was the first to express, if not in full, the high unity that we spoke of" (i.e., the unity of being and thinking.—*G. P.*).\*

It will be useful to compare with this the following argument of Herzen: "The Encyclopaedists expressed the extreme in realism; they represent their side of the human spirit in just as real, complete and true a fashion as the idealists do theirs; both are limited by their times and must later shed their exclusive claims and unite in a single harmonious understanding of the truth. That was the reconciliation, we repeat, which Schelling and all his followers strove after; it was for this reconciliation that Hegel built an extensive foundation—the rest will be completed by time."

This is most characteristic of Herzen's philosophical views at the time. He justifiably believed the problem of the relation between thinking and being, between subject and object to be the cardinal problem of philosophy. He evaluated any given philosophical system first and foremost in respect of this problem. Any other course of action would certainly have been impossible for someone who was a disciple of such a consistent monist and implacable enemy of all forms of dualism as Hegel. In Hegel's teaching, as in that of Schelling, the unity of thinking and being is simultaneously the basis and the crown of all other philosophical constructions. It should be recognised that this constituted the great advantage of their philosophy over, let us say, Kant's dualistic philosophy. But how did the great monists Schelling and Hegel interpret the unity of thinking and being? It is easy to

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\* *Works*, Vol. II, pp. 284-85.

guess that they interpreted it in the *idealist* sense: otherwise they would not have been *idealists*. But that is precisely the point: their interpretation was incorrect, as Feuerbach had already shown.

In Feuerbach's words, the idealist philosophy, which found its extreme expression in Schelling and Hegel, eliminated the contradiction between being and thinking while remaining within it, that is, it did not actually eliminate it at all. This means the following: according to Hegel, thinking is being, since, in the final analysis, there is nothing but thinking; nature itself is nothing but the spirit's other-being: to create nature, the absolute idea opposes itself to itself. According to Hegel, "thinking is the subject and being is the predicate", says Feuerbach expressing the same idea in the philosophical parlance of the day. But if this is true, if thinking is being, in Hegel's view, there is no point in looking for unity of thinking and being: *it is given beforehand*. Thus we find that Hegel did not solve the antinomy of being and thinking but only eliminated one of its constituent elements—being, matter, nature. Feuerbach added, and again quite justifiably, that if, according to Hegel's teaching, nature is created through the idea opposing itself to itself, this is only a translation into the language of speculative philosophy of the theological teaching about the creation of matter by the spiritual essence of nature—God.

That was Feuerbach's view. And what about Herzen? He thought, as we have seen, that Schelling "was the first to express, if not in full, the high unity" of being and thinking and that Hegel had built "an extensive foundation" for that unity. True, there were certain aspects of the solution of the problem by Schelling-Hegel that did not appear satisfactory to him either, but he did not regard these aspects as being of much consequence: he maintained that time would complete that which had not been completed by the great German idealists.\* That was the fundamental philosophical mistake made by the author of the *Letters Concerning the Study of Nature*. Herzen said there that, after Hegel, to go forward would mean to leave the domain of idealism, and this

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\* A little further on Herzen says: "Hegel understood the actual relation of being to thinking; but to understand does not mean to give up the old entirely.... None of those born in Egyptian captivity entered the Promised Land.... By his genius, by the power of his thought Hegel suppressed the Egyptian element, and it remained more as a bad habit with him; Schelling, however, was crushed by it" (*Works*, Vol. II, p. 73). Thus, Hegel was essentially right and only expressed himself badly from old idealist habit. This bad habit, it appears, will have to be cured by time. In other words, this means that absolute idealism determined the relation of thinking to being *correctly*. Herzen treats Schelling less favourably here, but it should be borne in mind that Schelling had by that time already expounded his reactionary "philosophy of revelation".

was quite true. But when he himself tried to make that step forward, his starting point was the idealist solution of the antinomy between thinking and being as suggested by Hegel. His criticism of idealism therefore was no more than a criticism of *subjective* idealism which was of little consequence at the time. This is quite clear from what he says about Schelling's role: appearing on the scene at the height of the battle between Fichte, on the one hand, and the "French" (i.e., the French materialists), on the other, Schelling was the first, in Herzen's words, to express, if not quite clearly, the idea of the unity of being and thinking. It is therefore not surprising that our author continued to view materialism through the eyes of the great German idealists. He read the *System of Nature*, but he read it after having formed an erroneous view of materialism and he therefore found things in this book that were not there, and did not pay proper attention to the things that *were* there.

It is interesting that Herzen already knew Feuerbach at the time when he wrote his *Letters Concerning the Study of Nature*: Ogarev had introduced him to that thinker when he visited Herzen in his exile in Novgorod and brought along the famous book *Das Wesen des Christenthums*. This book delighted the Novgorod exile. "After reading the first few pages, I jumped with joy," he says. "Away with fancy dress, away with tongue-tie and allegory, we are free people and not Xanthus' slaves, we do not have to clothe truth with myths!"\* However, carried away by Feuerbach as he was, Herzen by no means assimilated, as we have seen, his negative view of Hegel's teaching on the unity of thinking and being. He therefore remained incomparably closer to idealism than to Feuerbach; only at times, only in some passages in the *Diary* and the *Letters Concerning the Study of Nature*, only when he approvingly quotes articles in which thought and spirit are declared to be the results of matter and history does he allow beliefs to burst through that are akin to Feuerbach's materialist views. But these are only exceptions that confirm the general rule, the general rule being that Herzen continues to adhere to idealism.

However, one has to make a rather extensive reservation here. The essence of Feuerbach's materialist view is embodied in the idea (of which all Marxists are perfectly well aware) that it is not being that is determined by thinking but thinking that is determined by being. Being is determined by itself; it is founded in itself. Therefore Feuerbach, in opposition to Hegel, held that being is the object, while thinking is an attribute of the object.\*\* It is not an abstract entity that thinks, not the "I" with which

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\* *Works*, Vol. VII, p. 133.

\*\* In the philosophical parlance of the day that sounded like this: "being is the subject, thinking is the predicate".

idealist philosophy is concerned. It is my body that thinks; my body is my "I". But this "I" is an "I" only for myself; for another person it is not an "I" but a "thou". Thus idealists are mistaken in taking the "I" for a starting point. The starting point must be simultaneously "I" and "thou". It seems like a paradox: Feuerbach appears to want to take *two points* for a starting *point*. But it only appears to be so: in fact Feuerbach takes for a starting point a single thesis which says that the "I" *is not only the subject but simultaneously the object* (the subject for oneself, the object for another person). This is the materialist teaching on the unity of thinking and being, the subject and the object, spirit and matter. Feuerbach says: "That which for myself, or subjectively, is a purely spiritual, non-material, non-sensuous act in itself, objectively, is a material and sensuous act."

Consider this carefully, and you will surely agree with Feuerbach. And having agreed with him, you will see for yourselves how weak those idealistic arguments are that were set forth by Herzen in the *Letters Concerning the Study of Nature*. He argued that materialism rejects everything "non-sensuous". But you have just heard yourselves from Feuerbach that the "non-sensuous" is merely another aspect of the "sensuous" and that to eliminate one of the elements of the antinomy between being and thinking means to avoid its solution, not to solve it. Herzen laid the blame at the wrong door. That was a grave misunderstanding on which most of his criticism of materialism was founded. His reasoning was as follows: "It is certain that experience stimulates consciousness, but it is just as certain that the stimulated consciousness is not produced by it, that experience is only a condition, an impetus, but the kind of impetus that can by no means be responsible for the consequences because they are not in its power, because consciousness is not a tabula rasa but an actus purus,\* an activity that is not exterior in respect of the object but, on the contrary, its innermost essence, since in general the thought and the object are not two different objects but two aspects of a single entity."\*\*

These last words that are directed against philosophical dualism and not against materialism are the words of a *monist*. But the idea that experience serves as an impetus to consciousness that is not responsible for its consequences, since consciousness is an actus purus and not a tabula rasa, once again reveals the idealist nature of the kind of monism to which Herzen adhered when he wrote the *Letters Concerning the Study of Nature*.

If experience is not responsible for its own consequences, that means that human intellect lays down laws for nature, as Kant once taught. But this view was refuted by Feuerbach, too.

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\* [clean tablet ... pure activity]

\*\* *Works*, Vol. II, p. 277.

He wrote these remarkable words: "The book of nature is by no means a wild chaos of letters thrown pell-mell one upon the other, a chaos into which the intellect first introduces mutual connection and order by subjectively and arbitrarily combining letters into meaningful sentences. Nay, the intellect discerns and combines things on the basis of features provided by the external perceptions; we divide that which is divided in nature, and connect that which is connected in it; we subordinate one thing to another as ground and consequence, as cause and effect, because such is their factual, sensuous, actual and objective mutual relationship."\*

Only this view of the relation of being to thinking provides a meaningful interpretation of those lines in Jordan's article, approvingly quoted by Herzen, which assert that "spirit and thought are the results of matter and history" and that thought in general is nothing but the "world, inasmuch as the world cognises itself" (see above).\*\* Had Herzen regarded thought as the *actus purus* determining "the consequences of experience", he would have had to declare these lines meaningless.

Herzen's remark that it is not experience that "produces" consciousness is equivalent, unless I am mistaken, to the proposition that motion, to which ultimately all experience is reduced, is *not transformed into thought*, or, in other words, *that thought is not the motion of matter*. This need hardly be discussed after all that has been said above. Of course, thought is *not* a material act, if it is *another aspect* of such an act. Only if one fails to comprehend the materialist teaching can one interpret it in the sense of *identification* of motion and thought. Consistent materialists would view this as equivalent to the *identification of thinking and being* which they impute to idealism. *Their unity* of being and thinking is by no means an *identity*.\*\*\*

Herzen also advances some arguments against materialism that have no direct bearing on the problem just discussed. I shall deal with them later. The reader will then agree, I trust, that these arguments, sometimes very unexpected ones, are also based on a misunderstanding.

\* *Werke*, II, S. 322-23. Later Engels remarked very wittily that if our intellect arbitrarily includes a shoe-brush in the unity mammals, this does not help to get mammary glands.<sup>200</sup>

\*\* Jordan seems to have adhered to Feuerbach's solution of the problem: he said that in assuming thought to be the *prius* [primary], philosophy does not eliminate the antithesis between thinking and being.

\*\*\* The opinion, borrowed by Herzen from Hegel, that thought is "a degree of development just as mechanism, chemism, and organic structure" (see above) is therefore equally untenable. Thought is by no means a *super-organic* phenomenon: it is a *function of the organism* at a certain level of development.



## IV

I may be told that, in criticising materialism, our author did not have in mind Feuerbach's teaching at all but the materialism of *former times*, prior to eighteenth-century French materialism and inclusive of it, and that present-day historians of philosophy do not even recognise Feuerbach as a materialist. To this I shall answer that Herzen believed his arguments against the materialism of former times to be irrefutable for all types of materialism in general and that, in the field that is of interest for our discussion, the theoretical positions of the former materialism, at least from Hobbes onwards, do not differ *essentially* from those of Feuerbach. It is clear, then, how one should treat the argument that Feuerbach was not a materialist at all. It is founded not on what *was* but on what *ought to have been* according to some ideologists of the bourgeoisie that has become very conservative, prim and pious in its old age. These ideologists follow the rule, convenient for them but otherwise laughable and pitiable, of not recognising any serious thinker as a materialist, whatever his teaching might be. Some time ago, in a dispute with me in the *Neue Zeit*, Conrad Schmidt even refused to recognise La Mettrie, Holbach and Helvétius as materialists.<sup>201</sup> It may only be noted, apropos of such arguments, that one should know where to stop even when one intends for some reason to make a laughing-stock of oneself.

Assuming it to be superfluous to repeat here what I have said on various other occasions about Feuerbach's materialism, I shall only remind the reader of the following fact.

When Moleschott's book *Lehre der Nahrungsmittel*\* appeared, Feuerbach not only greeted it joyously—he also declared that it solved the most difficult problems of philosophy and that it contained the true “principles of the philosophy of the future”.\*\* Could it be that Moleschott is also erroneously counted among materialists?

No good talking this sort of nonsense! Engels was quite right in saying: “The course of evolution of Feuerbach is that of an Hegelian ... into a materialist.”\*\*\*<sup>202</sup> But any development has its phases. Feuerbach himself admitted later that the viewpoint of his book *The Essence of Christianity* was not his final viewpoint

\* Translated into Russian under the title «Учение о пище» [*The Teaching on Nutrition*], it also played a role in our intellectual development.

\*\* That was the title of one of the principal philosophical works of Feuerbach. See *Ludwig Feuerbach in seinem Briefwechsel und Nachlass, dargestellt von Karl Grün*, Vol. II, p. 81.

\*\*\* Our Slavophiles, e.g., Khomyakov, also considered him to be a materterist.

and was to a certain extent guilty of the sin of idealism.\* Herzen also developed away from Hegelianism towards materialism, but his *Letters Concerning the Study of Nature* are incomparably further from a consistent materialist teaching than Feuerbach's *Essence of Christianity*. If I were asked to what phase in Feuerbach's development the philosophical view expressed in Herzen's *Letters Concerning the Study of Nature* corresponds, I would be strongly tempted to reply: to the same phase as Feuerbach's article "Kritik des Idealismus" devoted to the analysis of F. Dorguth's book *Kritik des Idealismus und Materialien zur Grundlegung eines apodiktischen Real-Rationalismus* and written in 1838. In this article, by the way, Feuerbach challenges the idea that thinking is only a predicate of being, that is, the very idea that later became the foundation of his own philosophy. I believe that the author of the *Letters Concerning the Study of Nature* would regard as quite correct the arguments which Feuerbach advances *against* this idea in the above-mentioned article.\*\*

Now it also becomes clear how Herzen could, as we have seen, approve of Leibnitz's indubitable and extreme idealism *while he was under the influence of a study of Feuerbach*: the fact is that Feuerbach's studies in the history of philosophy belong to the *pre-materialist period* in his theoretical development.\*\*\*

But one thing is noteworthy. As we have seen, the Hegelian solution of the antinomy between thinking and being is, according to Feuerbach, merely a translation into the language of philosophy of the theological teaching about the creation of nature by God. The author of the *Letters Concerning the Study of Nature* resolutely opposed this teaching. It is known that his friendship with Granovsky suffered precisely because the latter was loath to part with this age-old theological thesis. But, while opposing Feuerbach in one guise, in his theological attire, Herzen stood up for him (in the *Letters*) because he wore a philosophical costume.\*\*\*\*

\* It is perhaps owing to this defect that Mr. Lunacharsky finds it possible to contrast now the view of religion expressed in this book with that of "Engels and Plekhanov". Messrs. A. Lunacharsky and Bogdanov are ready to applaud any slip by any thinker, if that slip brings him closer to idealism.

\*\* The article against Dorguth is in the second volume of the complete works of Feuerbach, pp. 131-45 (the 1904 edition). Let this be remembered: I am certainly not saying that Feuerbach later agreed with Dorguth about everything. This was not so. I merely maintain that the idea, in the text, which he rejected in his controversy with Dorguth, was fully accepted by him in the course of time. That is all.

\*\*\* See his own admission on this point in his *Works* (Vol. II, p. 406).

\*\*\*\* Many German readers and admirers of Feuerbach, while delighting in his *Essence of Christianity*, did not have a clear idea of his basic philosophical views. This became evident as early as the forties. Cf. the above-mentioned article by Fr. Schmidt in the *Deutsches Bürgerbuch*, Vol. II, p. 65. It will not be out of place to note, however, that Fr. Schmidt himself did not quite escape this defect.

This was a manifest inconsistency, of which such people of the sixties as Chernyshevsky and Dobrolyubov were free.\* Herzen too, it seems, got rid of it later. But, since it made itself felt in his important works like the *Letters Concerning the Study of Nature*, it could hardly escape the attention of the "people of the sixties", who were well versed in philosophy. Chernyshevsky and Dobrolyubov were also staunch followers of Feuerbach, but the Feuerbach whom they followed was the Feuerbach of the later phase of development, the Feuerbach who wrote *Vorläufige Thesen zur Reform der Philosophie, Grundsätze der Philosophie der Zukunft, Wider den Dualismus von Leib und Seele* and an extremely characteristic introduction to the first edition of his complete works. In view of this, the "people of the sixties" had grounds to assume that they knew Feuerbach better and were more faithful to him than the progressives of the forties.\*\* It is permissible to suppose that this assumption revealed itself in Dobrolyubov's ironic exclamation about Bersenev<sup>203</sup>: "Would it not be curious to hear what he says about Feuerbach!" If this assumption (which is, perhaps, destined to remain no more than an assumption) is correct, then "very fine Russian gentleman" Bersenev suffered here not only for himself, but nearly for a whole generation.

Further I shall indicate Herzen's later works in which he seems to be making a clean break with idealism. For the present, however, I can confine myself to repeating that to date this break to the spring of 1844 is out of the question: at that period he adhered, as we have seen, to the idealist solution of the problem of the relation of thinking to being.

We have all been so accustomed to regard Herzen as a "realist"—without, however, attributing any definite theoretical content to the term "realism"—that what I have said here about his idealism may seem strange to many. But this idealism is a fact that is not to be talked away and that had to be pointed out in the interests of the history of Russian social thought. Some readers may be distressed to hear about the idealism of the author of the *Letters Concerning the Study of Nature*; to console such readers, I shall recount the following episode.

During my first encounter with Engels I talked to him, among other things, about Lassalle, whom he knew very well, of course. In characterising his philosophical views, Engels said to me: "Just imagine, he believed till his dying day in the pre-existence of Hegelian categories (Präexistenz der Hegelschen Kategorien)!"

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\* On Chernyshevsky and his relation to Feuerbach see my book *N. G. Chernyshevsky* and my article "Chernyshevsky's Aesthetic Theory" in the symposium *Twenty Years*.

\*\* If one judges by the *Essays on the Gogol Period of Russian Literature*, it appears that one flattering exception, at any rate, was made in this case—for V. G. Belinsky.

This will be easily believed by anyone acquainted with, for example, such a work by Lassalle as his *System der erworbenen Rechte*. Lassalle's world outlook had its weak points. But the fact is that in his *Letters Concerning the Study of Nature* Herzen criticises materialism precisely as a person who believes—at times, at any rate—in the *Präexistenz der Hegelschen Kategorien*. The reader will kindly recall what our author said about the “pre-existing concept” being realised in the organic process. Even more expressive in this respect is his praise of Hegel's attempt to explain the dialectical process of nature “without introducing any agency other than the logical movement of the concept”.

## V

It has been widely believed until recently that, whereas Belinsky was at one time keen on Hegel's “philosophical cap”, Herzen luckily avoided this error of youth and never had a positive attitude to the “cap”, because he adhered to the “realist” point of view. We now see just how mistaken that belief was. Herzen was also destined to wear Hegel's “philosophical cap” for a long time, and it would be quite absurd to feel sorry about that, as it was not a calamity for him but great good fortune. Our brilliant author would have remained, in his own words, “not complete, not modern”, unless he had been through the “tempering crucible” of Hegel's logic. The only thing about the common view of the course of his intellectual development that is correct, is that Hegel's philosophy never led him—as opposed to Belinsky—to a reconciliation with Russian reality. This difference resulted largely from two causes: first, the circumstances of the times; second, the fact that Herzen's cast of mind was unlike Belinsky's.

Herzen, who in his youth belonged to the “politicians”, began his acquaintance with Hegel's philosophy a few years later than Belinsky. That was very important at a time when each new year was bringing many new victories to the Left wing of Hegel's school and many new defeats to its Right wing. These victories and defeats did not remain unknown in Russia. Herzen himself gives a very graphic description of how closely German philosophical literature was followed in Moscow. “All the most insignificant brochures that appeared in Berlin and other capital and district towns of German philosophy, in which Hegel was mentioned, were subscribed to, and read so eagerly that they became dog-eared and greasy and the pages began falling out in a few days.”\* He adds jokingly that all the Werders, Marheinekkes, Michelets, Ottos, Watkes, Schallers, Rosenkranzes and even Arnold Ruge

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\* *Works*, Vol. VII, p. 121. We have seen how quickly Wigand's *Quarterly* reached him.

himself would be moved to tears on hearing "what bloody battles and strife they had engendered in Moscow between Maroseika and Mokhovaya Street, and how eagerly they were read and *bought*".\* It was not only the Ottos, Marheinekes and Michelets who were bought and read, however, but also representatives of the Left wing. One of them, Arnold Ruge, is mentioned by Herzen himself; to Ruge must be added Bruno Bauer, Stirner, Jordan, already referred to above, and many others. One can see from Herzen's diary, for example, that he was well aware of the indignation aroused in progressive German circles by the punishment of Bruno Bauer whose *licentia docendi*\*\* was revoked by the authorities for his daring theological research. Not did the *Deutsche Jahrbücher*,<sup>204</sup> the organ of the Left Hegelians, remain unknown to him. The latter are referred to in the following entry in his *Diary*: "With these German philosophy is stepping out of the lecture hall into life, it is becoming social, revolutionary, acquiring flesh, and, consequently, direct effect in the world of events. Great strides in political upbringing are clearly visible here, and the Germans are almost becoming free from the things for which they are usually blamed.... One of the articles ends outright with this: we must decide once and for all: 'Christianity and Monarchy or Philosophy and the Republic!' Here is Germany lancée [thrown.—G.P.] into political emancipation", etc.\*\*\*

When one receives such impressions from the interpreters of this philosophical system, it is impossible to understand this system in the sense of reconciliation with reality—quite the reverse.\*\*\*\*

Hegel's teaching was a detailed and consistently elaborated system of absolute idealism. Absolute idealism claimed to be the philosophical revelation of the absolute truth. And since, according to Hegel, the truth is cognised by man only after it has been realised in life ("Minerva's owl does not begin its flight until night-fall"), the thinker who believes himself to be the possessor of a whole system of absolute truth is bound to regard the social and political institutions of his time as very close to perfection. Hegel's "absolute" claims prompted him to make conservative con-

\* Ibid., p. 122. Italics as in the original.

\*\* [a docent's diploma]

\*\*\* *Works*, Vol. I, pp. 30-31. Otto Wigand's *Quarterly* was also an organ of the Left wing of Hegel's school.

\*\*\*\* Progressive German intellectuals of the time—as represented by the so-called true (or philosophical) socialists, at any rate—coped with the "rationality of reality" in a rather original fashion. In Hegel the words "*all that is real is rational*" were complemented by the words "*all that is rational is real*". The German socialists of the "true" trend said: since our aspirations are *rational*, they are bound to become *real*, i.e., *be realised*. Thus, for them, Hegel's teaching led to a reconciliation with utopianism and not with reality. There are no indications, however, that Herzen was familiar with this socialism before he went abroad.

clusions, and those who reconciled themselves to these claims had to accept these conclusions as well. That was what Belinsky did for a while. But there was also another aspect to Hegel's teaching—the *dialectical aspect*. The dialectical view of the world, which was magnificently expressed in the words of Heraclitus the Obscure “everything is fluid, everything changes”, excludes all conservatism and reconciles itself beforehand with the progressive development of society, inasmuch, of course, as it remains faithful to itself. The struggle of the Left Hegelians against the Right signified the revolt of those who valued primarily the dialectical aspect of Hegel's teaching against those who inclined to philosophical absolutism. Herzen realised that clearly. He wrote: “Hegel's great achievement was that he embodied science in method in such a way that as soon as one understands his method, one forgets his personality.”\* In his article on “Buddhism in Science” he gibes acrimoniously at formalists who “wonder what people are making a fuss about when everything has been explained and understood and when humanity has achieved an *absolute*\*\* form of being, which is amply proved by the fact that modern philosophy is an absolute philosophy, and science is always identical to the epoch but only as its result, i.e., upon realisation in being. For them this sort of proof is irrefutable”\*\*\*. For fear lest the reader should doubt the existence of such “formalists”, Herzen refers to the now forgotten Hegelian Bayrhofer who wrote an “absolute” book *Die Idee und Geschichte der Philosophie*. He does not in the least conceal his approval of the adherents of the dialectical world outlook.

In his words, they are more faithful to Hegel than Hegel himself; they “proceed from his principles and boldly oppose his inconsistency—firmly convinced that they are fighting *for him and not against him*”\*\*\*\*. Hegel himself appears in his delineation as a philosopher who understood the deeply revolutionary nature of his dialectical idealism but was frightened by it. According to him, the fear that Hegel felt on account of the revolutionary character of his own philosophy explains even the generally known fact that Hegel wrote in an exceedingly heavy style.

“Despite the power and grandeur of his genius, Hegel was also a man; he was in mortal fear of expressing himself simply in an age that expressed itself affectedly, just as he was afraid to follow his principles to their ultimate conclusion; he lacked the heroism of consistency, of self-sacrifice in accepting the truth in all its compass, whatever the cost. The greatest men have stopped before the obvious result of their principles; some retreated fearfully and

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\* *Works*, Vol. II, p. 159.

\*\* Italics as in the original.

\*\*\* *Works*, Vol. I, p. 373.

\*\*\*\* *Works*, Vol. II, p. 159.

hid themselves in obscurity, instead of seeking clarity. Hegel saw that much of what was generally accepted had to be sacrificed: out of pity, he forebore to strike; but, on the other hand, he could not help expressing that which he was called upon to express."\* Hence Hegel's impossibly heavy style.

The same view of Hegel is expressed in *My Past and Thoughts*. It is said there: "During his professorship in Berlin, Hegel, partly from old age and doubly so because of the position and esteem, intentionally raised his philosophy above the mundane level and kept to the milieu where all contemporary interests and passions become rather indistinct, like buildings and villages viewed from a balloon; he disliked getting involved with these confounded practical problems, which were difficult to deal with and had to be answered positively."\*\*

This view of Hegel "intentionally raising" his philosophy above the mundane level does not stand up to criticism. Its erroneous character was proved by the entire subsequent development of progressive thought in the West. In actual fact not just Hegel himself but Left Hegelians, too, failed to understand the revolutionary content of Hegel's philosophy as a whole and all its possible conclusions. Such an understanding is only found in the works of Marx and Engels who, having been through Feuerbach's school after Hegel's, placed the dialectic "*upon its feet*", that is, transformed it from an *idealist* dialectic, as it remained in Hegel and the Left Hegelians, Bruno Bauer included, into a *materialist* one. But, be this as it may, it is noteworthy that Herzen in this case, too, was very close to the Left Hegelians in Germany. In Bruno Bauer's well-known book *Die Posaune des jüngsten Gerichts über Hegel, den Atheisten und Antichristen*, the great German idealist is also presented as a man who realised clearly the revolutionary "consequences" that followed from his "principles". No less noteworthy is the fact that Bruno Bauer, in depicting Hegel as an extreme revolutionary in the sphere of thought, himself remained an idealist. Because of this, the materialist Feuerbach even entered into polemics with him in his *Vorläufige Thesen zur Reform der Philosophie*.

## VI

I have noted above that wearing Hegel's "philosophical cap" was not a calamity but Herzen's great good fortune, as it tempered his mind. If any doubt on this point were now possible, I could again cite the *Letters Concerning the Study of Nature*. I have brought out the principal theoretical mistake of their author. It seems that this mistake may quite justifiably be imputed to

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\* *Works*, Vol. I, pp. 349-50.

\*\* *Works*, Vol. VII, pp. 124-25.

Hegel: it was that Herzen failed to grasp clearly the materialist teaching on the unity of thinking and being. But the causes lay, properly speaking, in idealism, and not in the particular shape into which Hegel moulded it. So when I say that Hegel's influence tempered Herzen's mind, I mean the dialectical aspect of his philosophy and not the idealistic one. Just how favourable was the effect of this aspect on Herzen will be easily seen by anyone who undertakes the pleasant task of re-reading the *Letters Concerning the Study of Nature*. These letters, despite their weakness pointed out above, must be recognised as Herzen's great theoretical and literary achievement. Just think: in these letters our author sought to pave the way for a drawing together of philosophy and the natural sciences at the very time when, e.g., Y. F. Samarin was busy—just as, let us say, Mr. Bazarov is today—uniting philosophy with religion.\* It is quite clear that to draw Hegel's philosophy together with religion one had to concentrate, primarily, on the "absolute" aspect of Hegelianism, and, it is equally clear that to draw philosophy and the natural sciences together one had to rest primarily on dialectics. The *Letters Concerning the Study of Nature* contain some truly brilliant pages presenting the dialectical view of the world process. It is impossible for me to reproduce these pages here—they are too numerous; but I cannot resist the temptation to copy out some of the more characteristic passages.

In his approving exposition of Heraclitus' views, Herzen writes: "Being is alive through motion; on the one hand, life is nothing but continuous, non-stop motion, an active struggle or, if you prefer, an active reconciliation of being with non-being, and the more fierce and stubborn this struggle, the closer they are to each other, the higher the life developed by them; this struggle is eternally at the end and eternally at the beginning—a continuous interaction out of which they cannot escape."\*\*

Let it not be assumed that Herzen confines himself to a repetition and a certain expansion of the general idea of the "obscure" philosopher from Ephesus that "everything is fluid, everything changes". Not so: he knows how to use this general idea and apply it to the individual phenomena of nature. Here are his remarks on the organism:

"The animal organism represents a constant struggle against death that triumphs each time; but this triumph is again in favour of definite being and not of non-being. The multi-elemental

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\* In advocating a drawing together of the natural sciences and philosophy, Herzen at times said almost precisely the same as Feuerbach (see, e.g., Feuerbach in his *Vorläufige Thesen zur Reform der Philosophie*, *Works*, Vol. II, p. 244). But this idea acquires, on the whole, an idealist tinge in Herzen, whereas in Feuerbach it is materialist.

\*\* *Works*, Vol. II, p. 114.



tissues of which the living body is composed are continually being decomposed into bi-elemental ones (i.e., inorganic, mineral ones) and continually being formed anew; hunger renews its demands because material is continually being used up; breathing maintains life and burns up the organism; the organism continually produces that which is burnt up. If an animal is not fed, its blood and brain will burn up.... The more developed life is, the higher the sphere it has attained, the more desperate the struggle between being and non-being, the closer they are to each other."\*

Another passage: "The majority of people (I mean those who know themselves to be literate) these days has so lost the habit, or never acquired it, of defining ideas that, it makes only unconscious use of them, without being offended. We are not surprised, for example, by the fact that man in the physiological sense is something indivisible, integral, an atom, while anatomically he is a conglomerate of numerous and extremely multiform parts; that our body is simultaneously our *self* and our other; no one is surprised by the process of emergence continually taking place all around us, this muted strife between being and non-being, without which there would be nothing but indifference; no one is surprised by the eternal nature of the transient that surrounds us. Name that which good folk see and feel daily—they will not understand you and will never recognise their close acquaintances from your words."\*\*

The last passage: "Practically we look at things in precisely Heraclitean fashion [i.e., dialectically.—*G. P.*]; only in the universal sphere of thought do we fail to understand what we are doing. Has not man realised from time immemorial that it is not the dead inertness of the object as it exists and not its identity with itself that is the whole truth about it? In all that is animate, for example, do we see anything but the process of eternal transformation that seems to be alive through alteration only? Bones are the most durable being of the organism, and we even do not regard them as animate."\*\*\*

All these extracts may easily produce the impression that they were written not at the beginning of the forties, but in the latter half of the seventies, and not by Herzen, but by Engels.\*\*\*\* Such

\* Ibid., pp. 114-15.

\*\* *Works*, Vol. II, p. 137.

\*\*\* Ibid., p. 117. In January 1845 Herzen read enthusiastically Dumas' history of chemistry and made this interesting remark: "Without chemistry there is no physiology, consequently, no natural sciences. The natural sciences have so far had an extremely insecure basis as they dealt with morphology only and not with that *which changes in it*" (*Works*, Vol. I, p. 264).

\*\*\*\* See Engels' controversy with Dühring that appeared in Russian under the title «Философия. Политическая экономия. Социализм (Анти-Дюринг)», стр. 15 и след. [*Philosophy. Political Economy. Socialism (Anti-Dühring)*], p. 15 et seq.<sup>1206</sup>

is the extent to which the ideas of the former resemble the ideas of the latter. This striking resemblance shows that Herzen's mind was working in the same direction as Engels' and, consequently, Marx's. It was not for nothing that Herzen went through the same Hegelian school as did, almost simultaneously, the founders of scientific socialism. The only difference, and it was a very essential difference, of course, was that Herzen's dialectics remained idealist whereas the dialectics of Marx and Engels was already materialist. That I am not being unjust to Herzen should, I think, be clear after all that has been said above. Here is one more quite convincing argument, however, just in case.

Having expounded, with the greatest approval, Heraclitus' dialectical view of the universe, our author feels bound to point out its weakness.

"He [Heraclitus.—G. P.] did not only understand nature as a process: he understood it as a spontaneous process. However, nothing is expelled from this motion, there is no unity that is established by the temporal whirl and manifested from its result and its beginning. The beginning of motion in Heraclitus is a fatal and painful necessity that retains its quality in its diversity and ousts itself out, no one knows to what end, as an irresistible force, as an event, but not as a free and conscious goal. In general Heraclitus did not provide a goal for motion; his motion is more concrete than Eleatic being, but it is abstract; it clamours for a goal, for the constant."\*

This critical remark was written under the influence of Hegel, as one can see by reading the page on Heraclitus in Hegel's *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie*. But the fact that Herzen agreed with Hegel in this case reveals the idealist nature of his view of dialectics: only an idealist can talk of a "goal" of eternal world motion.

Despite its idealist character, Hegel's dialectical philosophy influenced Herzen favourably also in that he believed it necessary to "free" the natural sciences from "abstract forces". The natural sciences did indeed free themselves from these forces later, when the teaching on energy transformations emerged and became widespread.\*\*

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\* *Works*, Vol. II, pp. 118-19.

\*\* Herzen says: "There is no doubt whatever that mathematical thinking has advanced much farther than physics; the theory of infinitesimals alone proves this" (*Works*, Vol. II, p. 56). On another occasion he elaborates this view in detail. He praises mathematics for having parted with the *one or the other* of the intellect. "What is the differential?—an infinitesimal quantity; therefore it is either a quantity, in which case it is a finite quantity, or it is not a quantity at all in which case it is zero. But Leibnitz and Newton had a broader conception and accepted the existence of being and non-being, the initial motion of emergence, the shading off from nothing to something. The results of the theory of infinitesimals are well known. Further—

Engels' *Anti-Dühring* also reminds one of the *Letters Concerning the Study of Nature* in that it insistently tells naturalists that it would be very useful for them to take a dialectical view of nature. Engels remarks: "But the naturalists who have learned to think dialectically are few and far between, and this conflict of the results of discovery with preconceived modes of thinking explains the endless confusion now reigning in theoretical natural science, the despair of teachers as well as learners, of authors and readers alike."\*

Engels repeats here—of course, without suspecting it in the least—the complaints which recur on almost every page of the *Letters Concerning the Study of Nature*.

The esteemed naturalists do not show any great inclination towards a dialectical view of nature, although the chemical discoveries of the last few years have given extra evidence that in nature everything proceeds dialectically, as Engels puts it. The blame for this must be laid on present-day idealism which, incidentally, influences naturalists too and, unlike Hegel's idealism, cannot handle the weapon of dialectics at all.

Herzen also reproached naturalists for "their stubborn disinclination for analysing the relation of knowledge to the object, of thinking to being". In his words, naturalists "are so much afraid of the system of knowledge that they are even hostile towards materialism as a teaching; they would have preferred to treat their subject in an entirely empirical fashion, passively contemplating it; it stands to reason that, for a thinking being, this is just as impossible as for an organism to take nourishment without converting it".\*\* This, as the saying goes, hits the nail on the head. Naturalists have so far been unwilling to take the trouble to analyse the relation of being to thinking, so that philosophising naturalists usually manifest a childish helplessness each time they touch on this important subject. For illustrations one may refer to Ostwald, whose teaching on energy is based on a purely idealist theory of knowledge; to Mach, who revives Berkeley, and even to Haeckel, who sometimes all of a sudden and for no reason attacks materialism which is the only genuine content of his monistic theory. All these naturalists, unconsciously guilty of the sin of idealism, are naively convinced that their views have absolutely nothing in common with it. And that is quite understandable: when a scholar ignores some important question of theory, he

more, mathematics was not frightened by negative quantities, or incommensurability, or the infinite, or imaginary roots. And it goes without saying that all of this collapses before the 'one or the other' of the narrow intellect" (*Works*, Vol. I, pp. 294-95, note). This is a purely dialectical view of mathematics, borrowed from Hegel at that.

\* *Philosophy. Political Economy. Socialism*, published by Mr. Yakovenko, p. 16.<sup>206</sup>

\*\* *Works*, Vol. II, p. 40.

assimilates, against his will and unknown to himself, an antiquated and untenable solution of the question. As for Herzen, he adhered to an incorrect solution of the antinomy of thinking and being, following Hegel. That is why his reproach levelled at naturalists, quite correct in its essence, assumed the significance of an accusation that they preferred extreme empiricism to absolute idealism. Thus formulated, this accusation does not seem to be so very fearsome.

## VII

On October 26, 1843 Herzen made this entry in his diary, among others, under the influence of a conversation with I. V. Kireyevsky: "History, as the movement of mankind towards liberation and cognition of itself, towards conscious activity, does not exist for them, their view of history approaches that of scepticism and materialism from the opposite side. The whole life of mankind is a morbid, abnormal phenomenon. There is a mad consequence about it."\*

In his *Letters Concerning the Study of Nature*, arguing against the view that there is no need to study the history of philosophy, because it is a conglomeration of conflicting philosophical systems, he says: "That is not so. People whose eyes are so weak that they cannot discern the inner content visible through the outer form of the phenomenon, cannot discern the invisible unity behind the apparent diversity, these people, whatever you might say, will view the history of science as a hotch-potch of opinions of various wise men, each of them discoursing, in his own fashion, about different instructive and edifying subjects and having the nasty habit of always contradicting his teacher and quarrelling with his predecessors: that is atomicism, materialism in history; from this point of view not only the development of science, but the whole of world history seems to be a matter of personal invention and strange chance coincidences—an anti-religious view held by certain sceptics and the multitude of ignoramuses."\*\*

The modern reader will of course be surprised to hear this reproach addressed to Slavophiles that their view of history is close to the materialist one. Such a reproach is impossible in our epoch which may in a certain sense be called the epoch of historical materialism. But Herzen was completely unaware of this materialism, which, moreover, was not very well elaborated at the stage in our author's development which is considered here. Herzen did not anticipate that one of the most important theoretical achievements of his time would be the substantiation of the materialist view of history. He thought that "in materialism one could not

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\* *Works*, Vol. I, pp. 140-41.

\*\* *Works*, Vol. II, p. 91.

go further than Hobbes—unless one embraces scepticism".\* He could not of course regard Hobbes' *Leviathan* as a satisfactory attempt to explain the historical course of social development. Not could he be satisfied with the views of the eighteenth-century French materialists. Holbach used to say that the historical fate of a given people is sometimes determined for centuries ahead by a given movement of a given atom in the head of a given tyrant. This sort of historical materialism was indeed very close to complete scepticism. It is tantamount to a decisive recognition of the impossibility of a scientific explanation of the historical process. Herzen is right in saying that from this point of view "the whole of world history seems to be a matter of personal invention and strange chance coincidences", that it is "a morbid, abnormal phenomenon". And he, as Hegel's pupil, wanted to understand history precisely "as the movement of mankind towards liberation and cognition of itself, towards conscious activity". He wrote: "The history of thought is a continuation of the history of nature: neither mankind nor nature can be understood apart from historical development. The difference between these histories is that nature does not remember anything, it has no past, whereas man carries in himself all of his past: that is why man sees himself not only as an individual but as a species as well. History connects nature with logic: without history they fall apart."\*\* This means that he tried to consider history also in dialectical light. Being a Left Hegelian, he made dialectics the spiritual lever of revolutionary movement. He said: "Hegel's philosophy is the algebra of revolution: it has an extraordinarily liberating effect on man and razes to the ground the world of Christianity, the world of legends that have outlived themselves."\*\*\*

This is extremely well and vividly put. Regrettably, this extremely good and vivid expression of truth contains only part of it. Hegel's philosophy is the algebra of revolution because it "has an extraordinarily liberating effect on man". Just so. But what liberation is meant here? Man's *ideological* liberation. Hegel's philosophy is therefore the algebra of revolution because it contributes extraordinarily to the elaboration of revolutionary ideas. But from the point of view of Hegel, whose method Herzen is discussing here, ideas are by no means the main motive forces of historical movement: "Minerva's owl does not begin its flight until night-fall". We have seen above that, in speaking of Hegel's

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\* *Works*, Vol. II, p. 292. Apropos of this, Hume's scepticism is represented by Herzen as a *reductio ad absurdum* of materialism. In actual fact it is a step backwards, a return from materialism to idealism. Hume's philosophy has in our time been partially revived in Mach's teaching—insofar as one can ascribe any consistent philosophical system to Mach.

\*\* *Works*, Vol. II, p. 82.

\*\*\* *Works*, Vol. VII, p. 128.

natural philosophy, Herzen commended the great German idealist for his appeal to the logical movement of the concept as the only "agency". In his philosophy of history, too, Hegel did not cease to appeal to the logical movement of the concept as the highest instance. The question is whether Herzen approved of this appeal in the matter of the explanation of the historical process. This question has to be answered in the negative. I agree that in giving a negative answer one must make reservations, and yet I do not see any possibility of giving a positive answer.

The necessary reservation is the following. Adhering to Hegel's view of the relation of thinking to being, that is, remaining an idealist as far as the fundamental problem of any philosophy was concerned, Herzen could not help expressing himself as "absolute" idealist in his philosophy of history too. Here is a graphic example. In his *Letters Concerning the Study of Nature* he warns the reader: "Relating the logical process of self-cognition and the historical one is essentially the same. We choose the latter. The strict, lucid step of logic reconciled with itself is less to our liking."\* By the historical process of self-cognition he means here the historical development of philosophy. It so appears, according to him, that there is no difference between relating the logical process of self-cognition, i.e., expounding *logic*, and describing and explaining the historical movement of philosophical thought. This is irrefutable from the standpoint of Hegel, in whose view the development of philosophy, as all other development, is ultimately determined by the logical development of the absolute idea. In expressing this idea, irrefutable from Hegel's standpoint, Herzen appears as an orthodox Hegelian, an adherent of absolute idealism. But we already know that on another occasion he expressed dissatisfaction with Hegel's view of nature and history as applied logic. Consequently, Herzen perceived the untenability of the thesis which alone justified the belief that "it is essentially the same", etc. Indeed, in his historical discourses he very rarely has recourse to the "logical movement of the concept" as the deepest "agency"; for the most part they contain the view, also widespread among the Left Hegelians in Germany, according to which the course of history is determined by the course of mankind's ideological development. This view predisposed Herzen to understanding dialectics as the algebra of revolution.

The French materialists, whose historical views frightened Herzen, were in this case very close to him. Holbach's discourses on the stray atom capable of determining the course of human history for a long time ahead were an extreme which was rarely reached by the French materialists. More often men of this trend

\* *Works*, Vol. II, p. 83.

asserted: "C'est l'opinion qui gouverne le monde"—Opinion rules the world. That is the kind of historical idealism to which Left Hegelians, Herzen among them, came later. If we compare it with Hegel's philosophy of history, we shall see that it is much more shallow. Hegel readily repeated Anaxagoras' words: "νοῦς (reason) rules the world." But he added that there is reason in the motion of celestial bodies too, although the latter are not conscious of it. The concept of rationality was for him tantamount to conformity with laws. When he touched upon mankind's historical movement, he fully realised that the development of "opinion" by no means constituted its deepest cause. This realisation was reflected in his system as a reference to the logical movement of the concept (to repeat his expression used by Herzen). Of course, in itself this reference did not explain anything: it only reminded one of the inadequacy of the explanation that consisted in referring to "opinion". In his "philosophy of history" Hegel frequently proceeded like this: having made a reference to the movement of the concept—or, which is the same, to the development of the absolute idea—he realised, as it were, the impotence of this incorporeal "agency" and turned unexpectedly to real social relations, seeking a solution of the given historical phenomenon in them. Thus, for example, in connection with the fall of ancient Greece he expressed many lofty ideas about the development of the world spirit, and then abruptly turned to economics and declared that Lacedaemon fell because of inequality of property. So against his will his *Philosophy of History*\* led to conclusions that were in direct opposition to what he liked to repeat in his general philosophical discourses. He used to say: idealism reveals itself as the truth of materialism. But it appeared from his *Philosophy of History* that, on the contrary, materialism is the truth of idealism or, if we want to express ourselves more precisely, that materialism explains something where idealism proves to be mere "verbalism".\*\* Such appeals to economics, rather frequent in Hegel, introduced a materialist element not only into his *Philosophy of History* but also—and this is quite remarkable—into his aesthetics. The main drawback of the historical views of the authors who constituted the Left flank of his school, including Herzen, precisely was that they concentrated exclusively on the development of "opinion", did not notice the enormous fruitfulness of this materialist sin of Hegel and treated history as pure idealists. That was undoubtedly a step backwards in theory. But all the Left followers of Hegel reconciled themselves to it, with the exception of Marx and En-

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\* [Die Philosophie der Geschichte.]

\*\* See my article "For the Sixtieth Anniversary of Hegel's Death" in my symposium *A Critique of Our Critics*.<sup>207</sup>

gels.\* True, the most talented of them retained deep down in their "theoretical conscience" a more or less vague awareness of the untenability of such reconciliation. We shall see how Herzen was later tormented by this awareness. But with him, too, it never reached complete clarity, and that was the genuine and profound theoretical torment which he had to endure.

## VIII

That Herzen regarded the development of "opinion" as the main motive force of historical development may be demonstrated by very many passages from his diary as well as his *Letters Concerning the Study of Nature* and his articles "Dilettantism in Science" and "Buddhism in Science". As on other occasions, I shall confine myself to a few passages that seem to me to be the most convincing.

He has this to say about the ancient Orient: "Oriental man had no idea of his dignity: he was therefore either a slave prostrate in the dust or an unbridled despot."\*\* It need hardly be explained that the scientific inadequacy of this "therefore" is imperceptible only from the idealist viewpoint.

On Teutons he discoursed in this fashion: "The Teuton from the very outset appears with a character incomparably more free from all that is spontaneous, from the soil, from the generation, even from the family; the individual—that is the idea that he brings into the world, and, having exhausted the immense content of his idea, he leaves behind the *Déclaration des droits de l'homme* as a legacy for the future, terminating, as it were, his vocation.... In Teutons one can see from the very first step the idea that they will bring into the world."\*\*\*

Finally, here is another, even more remarkable idea, that has played a not insignificant role in the history of the Russian social movement. In Herzen's words, "the history of mankind is a continuation of the history of nature",\*\*\*\* but "in nature the idea exists corporeally, unconsciously, subjected to the law of necessity

\* One of the most outstanding representatives of so-called philosophical socialism in Germany, Moses Hess, who was strongly influenced by Feuerbach, accused the latter of adhering to the viewpoint of absolute materialism (see his article "Beachtenswerthe Schriften für die neuesten Bestrebungen" in the *Deutsches Bürgerbuch* für 1845, p. 98). This is extremely interesting and characteristic: philosophical socialism was leaning for support on the materialist Feuerbach but rejected his materialism because it did not find the requisite theoretical support for its utopian aspirations in materialism. For the same reason materialism was rejected in this country by the subjectivists (N. Mikhailovsky and others and is now rejected by the Machists Lunacharsky and Bogdanov). Everyone who rejected materialism for this reason found that it did not leave enough room for the individual's spontaneous activity.

\*\* *Works*, Vol. II, p. 96.

\*\*\* *Works*, Vol. I, p. 175.

\*\*\*\* *Ibid.*, p. 380.



and dark urges that are not eliminated by free understanding",\* whereas in history consciousness begins, and "where consciousness begins, moral freedom begins; each individual enacts his vocation *in his own fashion*, leaving an imprint of his personality on events".\*\*

Whereas Hegel's philosophy was, as Herzen said, the *algebra of revolution*, this latter idea of Herzen's concerning the freedom of individuals acting in history "*in their own fashion*" may be called the algebra of historical idealism as applied by him to the philosophy of practical action, in other words, the *algebra of utopianism*. Change the terminology here, and you will get the principal idea of the *Historical Letters* by P. L. Lavrov, who taught that history is made by critically thinking individuals who transform culture "*in their own fashion*". The theoretical mistake at the base of this algebraic formula of utopianism is familiar to us in a different form. As the reader may remember, Herzen attempted to prove, in refuting the materialist theory of cognition, that the activity of the intellect was an *actus purus* and therefore experience, while stimulating consciousness, did not determine the consequences of this stimulation. Feuerbach refuted this view (which Herzen was not, of course, the first to express) by pointing out that natural phenomena conform to laws independent of the human intellect. But precisely the same remark should be made in respect of history. Just as the *book of nature* is by no means a wild chaos of letters thrown pell-mell one upon the other, the *book of social life too* bears no resemblance to such chaos. Just as we divide that which is divided in *nature* and connect that which is connected in it, so in *social life* we cannot establish mutual links between events arbitrarily. Just as, in studying *nature*, we subordinate one thing to another as cause and effect only because this is their real, factual correlation, that is also the only reason why we have the right to talk about the causes and effects of social phenomena. If that is so, every given historical individual "enacts his vocation *in his own fashion*" only insofar as his "morally free work" is based on the law-governed course of social development and expresses it. Herzen praised Hegel for the fact that he "liberates man in his full development from his material definition", in other words, for Hegel's view that the poorer man's development, the greater his dependence on nature. This praise is entered in his diary under April 14, 1844, and the article ("Buddhism in Science") containing the reference to the individual freely "enacting his vocation", is dated March 23, 1843, i.e., it had been finished more than twelve months before that. It is quite permissible to think that the praise is not unconnected with the passage from the article analysed

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\* Ibid., p. 377.

\*\* Ibid., p. 380. Italics as in the original.

here. Herzen may have commended in his diary Hegel's idea precisely because it appeared to him to be new confirmation of his own idea about the relation of natural conformity with laws to moral freedom. But in general opposing conformity with laws to freedom was not in the spirit of Hegelian philosophy. Hegel said: "Die Freiheit ist dies: nichts zu wollen, als sich"\* ("freedom consists in wishing for nothing but one's self"). And that was indeed a brilliant definition; but it by no means excluded conformity with laws in the process of the *emergence* of wishes. On the contrary, it presupposed such conformity, since no wish arises without a cause. Moreover, Schelling had already shown that without necessity (i.e., conformity with laws) freedom was not possible either.\*\* Finally, Herzen seems to overlook the fact that the concept of *conformity with laws* is not limited to the concept of *conformity of a natural phenomenon with laws*, as there also exists *conformity of the historical process with laws*. But he made this mistake (or perhaps we ought rather to say: he allowed a certain vagueness of thought to creep in here) precisely because historical idealism, to which he adhered together with the entire Left wing of Hegel's school,\*\*\* concentrated on the development of the idea, i.e., on the *conscious* activity of the social man, which is represented as free activity not subject to the law of necessity. In this field, only scientific analysis can eliminate the kind of abstraction through which man is aware of himself as a cause without being aware of himself as an effect.\*\*\*\*

Concluding his article "Buddhism in Science", Herzen says: "From the ruins of the ancient world St. Augustine proclaimed the lofty idea of the City of God the construction of which is the ultimate goal of mankind, and pointed far ahead to the festive Sabbath of rest. That was the poetico-religious beginning of the philosophy of history; evidently, it was contained in Christianity but was not understood for a long time; it was not until a century ago that mankind began thinking about and in fact asking for an account of its life, foreseeing that its development is not fortuitous and that its life has a profound and a single all-embracing sense. By this adult question it indicated that its education was almost complete.\*\*\*\*\* Science set about answering it; no sooner had it pronounced the answer than man felt the need to leave the abode

\* Hegel's *Werke*, 12-er Band, S. 98.

\*\* This is perhaps his most brilliant idea.

\*\*\* I have already pointed out above that in this case I do not include Marx and Engels here. It would have been a mistake to do so, as their views went far beyond the limits of Left Hegelianism: the founders of scientific socialism often set themselves *in opposition* to the Left Hegelians.

\*\*\*\* It is not for nothing that Schelling said in the work mentioned above that the *unconscious* is necessity as opposed to freedom.

\*\*\*\*\* I.e., education of humanity. Earlier in his article Herzen quotes this expression of Lessing's.

of science—the second sign of adulthood. To open the doors with its own hands, however, science must carry out its vocation to the full; as long as there is at least one stronghold undefeated by self-cognition, the external will be a counterforce.... Mankind will leave the temple of science with its head proudly held up, inspired by the<sup>†</sup> realisation: *omnia sua secum portans*\*—to perform the will of God creatively.”\*\*

All of this is highly characteristic of Herzen *at that time* and is in complete agreement with the spirit of historical idealism. I shall not, of course, raise the question of whether Christianity contained any origins of the philosophy of *secular* history: in asserting this, Herzen was clearly paying tribute to the mystic tendencies to which he succumbed during his first exile. Note, however, the epoch with which, in his view, mankind's adulthood begins: the eighteenth century, which repeated with staunch conviction: “opinion rules the world.” Science explains to adult mankind the meaning of its own life story. When everything becomes clear in this sphere, the counteraction “of the external will be defeated and mankind will proudly start creating the kingdom of God on earth”. This is historical idealism in its most extreme form: the entire subsequent development of society is timed here to coincide with knowledge conquering the “strongholds” of unconsciousness; the design of the “City of God” will be elaborated by men of science. That was the view of the eighteenth-century Enlighteners; only their mode of expression was a little different: the role that Herzen's scheme assigned to *science* was in their system played by *philosophy*. It should be remembered, however, that by science Herzen meant philosophy—certainly not the kind of philosophy that carried all before it in the eighteenth century, but nevertheless philosophy.\*\*\*

The “strongholds” that have to be conquered by science are the various prejudices inherited by mankind from its childhood and teens. The fewer such “strongholds”, the easier it will be to create the “City of God”. The Enlighteners of the eighteenth century sometimes believed that the liberating commandment of their philosophy would be carried out with less difficulty in

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\* [carrying all of its own with it]

\*\* *Works*, Vol. I, pp. 382-83. The term “self-cognition” used here by Herzen reminds one of Bruno Bauer's favourite expression Selbstbewusstsein (self-consciousness) and proves once again that Herzen knew Bruno Bauer's work. Bauer differed from Feuerbach in that he remained an idealist whereas Feuerbach became an adherent of materialism. However, in the field of history Feuerbach remained an idealist.

\*\*\* I would like to add that, since German philosophical idealism of the forties also adhered to this idealist viewpoint, it may be assumed that in his idea concerning the creation of the “City of God” by science Herzen was not so much influenced by the eighteenth-century French Enlighteners as by contemporary German utopian socialism.

the "new countries" which had only recently embarked on the road of European civilisation. Herzen agreed with them. In his diary (October 29, 1844) he condemns the introduction of the right of primogeniture in Russia on the grounds that it would mean the loss of "those advantages which we had over Europe, the advantages of which Bentham wrote to Emperor Alexander I on his accession to the throne that it was easier for him than for any [other—*G.P.*] monarch to introduce sensible laws because Roman and feudal prejudices presented no obstacle".\*

This view of our "advantages" over Europe was expressed before Herzen as well: it was defended already by Chaadayev the pessimist and subsequently remained in Russia up to and including N. K. Mikhailovsky.

Historical idealism in general strongly exaggerated the role of individuals in history, particularly of individuals endowed with political power. This role, however, necessarily assumed vast proportions in their imagination when it was a question of the "new countries" untouched by "Roman and feudal prejudices" and therefore believed, as we have just seen, to be more accessible to their sovereigns exerting a conscious influence on them. We can observe this in Herzen as well. In his diary (March 5, 1844) he says: "The pathology and characteristics of Catherine, Paul and Alexander are the only clue to understanding Russian history of the modern age."\*\* This will hardly be accepted now even by Russian historians least inclined towards historical materialism.

## IX

How will adult and enlightened mankind build the "City of God"? In his article our author refuses to answer this question.

He says: "Just *how* belongs to the future. We can foresee the future because we are the premises on which its syllogism will be founded, but only in a general, abstract way."\*\*\* But the article does not even contain any "general, abstract" indications as to what he "foresaw", properly speaking, in the future. "When the time comes, the lightning of events will tear the clouds asunder and burn away the obstacles, and the future, like Pallas, will be born fully armed"—this is all that Herzen dared to say. And that is quite understandable: at that time censorship was not notable for its meekness. He expresses himself far more frankly in his diary, and we can see from it that his sympathy was

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\* *Works*, Vol. I, p. 276.

\*\* *Works*, Vol. I, p. 180. This is a much more idealist view than Gogol's idea (in his lecture on the Middle Ages) that "the entire history of the Middle Ages is the history of the pope". By the pope Gogol meant a whole institution and not a single individual.

\*\*\* *Ibid.*, p. 383.

with socialism. While diligently studying Hegel and the Left Hegelians, he was no less diligent in keeping up with socialist literature. His acquaintanceship with it even predated his acquaintanceship with the philosophical literature: he was a keen student of Saint-Simon while still at the university. At the time to which the diary belongs, however (1842-44), he concentrated more on reading the works of the Fourierists, notably V. Considérant, Louis Blanc and Proudhon. In February 1843 he formulated the general goal of the future social reform for himself as follows: "Public management of property and capital, communal life, organisation of work and recompense [that means, of course, remuneration for work.—G.P.] and property rights based on different principles. Not an absolute abolition of private property but the kind of investment by the society which gives the state the right of general direction."\* This programme is closer to Saint-Simonism as it was expressed in the works of Saint-Simon's followers; but Herzen remarks in the same passage that "Fourierism, of course, made a deeper study of socialism than any other trend".\*\* However, this is no evidence of unreserved enthusiasm for Fourierism either. In another entry in his diary we read that, "without any doubt, Saint-Simonists and Fourierists have expressed the greatest prophecies, *but something* is lacking there".\*\*\* Fourierism provoked his criticism by its "murderous flatness", whereas in Saint-Simonism, in his words, the pupils ruined the teacher. Obviously, in saying this, Herzen had in mind the strange behaviour of *Enfantin* and his closest associates.<sup>208</sup> But my task here is to present and criticise Herzen's philosophical views, not his socialist views. I can therefore confine myself to noting that in the forties Herzen still adhered to the point of view of *utopian socialism*, and proceed directly to assessing the influence which *Hegel* had on his attitude to socialist theory.

In his *Letters Concerning the Study of Nature* he makes the following unexpected and at the same time very remarkable comparison of contemporary socialists and Neo-Platonists: "In Neo-Platonists, just as in the socialist dreamers of today, we come across all the great words, like reconciliation, renovation ... but they remain abstract, abstruse.... Neo-Platonism was for scholars, for the few."\*\*\*\* Let us consider this comparison more closely, looking first at the praise it contains.

The socialists (probably called dreamers to allay the censor's suspicions) pronounce the great words "renovation" and "reconciliation". This praise for socialists is repeated several times by

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\* *Works*, Vol. I, p. 83.

\*\* *Ibidem*.

\*\*\* *Ibid.*, p. 187. Italics as in the original.

\*\*\*\* *Works*, Vol. II, p. 180.

Herzen on other occasions. This shows that he regarded their task first and foremost as one of reconciliation, and he was right in the sense that they themselves viewed their goal in that light. They stood in mortal fear of class struggle, and their programmes presupposed the establishment of peace between the various social classes.\* One of the causes of Herzen's later disillusionment with Western Europe was the fact that, instead of a peaceful solution of the social question, the events of 1848-49 involved a bloody struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie in France, that is, in the most advanced country of that time (at least, on the European continent),\*\* and that is not at all surprising, coming from an historical idealist. If the creation of the "City of God" is only delayed because science has not yet illuminated all the "strongholds", and if adult mankind is only awaiting the end of this theoretical enterprise before solemnly inaugurating practical social reforms, it is clear that the initiative and the supreme leadership in this campaign must belong to those classes or strata that are more brightly illuminated by the light of science. The popular masses, even those of Western Europe, seemed to Herzen almost completely incapable of comprehending scientific conclusions: "So far it has only been possible to talk to the people through Holy Writ", he notes in his diary.\*\*\* And that was not an expression of a fleeting mood but of a firm conviction. When, in 1847, he came to Paris and became convinced that the French bourgeoisie, even as represented by the intellectuals, did not intend to undertake social reform, he started to reflect on what would happen if the proletariat had to undertake it on its own. And here is the conclusion to which he came on this point:

"The bourgeoisie's only hope is the ignorance of the masses. The hope is great, but hatred and envy, revenge and long suffering are better educators than people think. It may be that the masses will not understand for a long time how to end their plight, but they will understand how to snatch away unjust rights—not to use them, but to break them, not to become rich, but to ruin others utterly."\*\*\*\*

Given this view of the *psychology* of the class struggle and its *possible outcome*, there was nothing to do but to seek a *reconciliation*. But there are reconciliations—and reconciliations. Reconciliation does not necessarily exclude struggle; on the contrary, very often it presupposes the latter as its prerequisite. Hegel's

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\* There are exceptions, but they are not at all characteristic of utopian socialism of that time.

\*\* For details see my article "A. I. Herzen and Serfdom" in the November issue of the *Sovremenny Mir* for last year.

\*\*\* March 24, 1844; *Works*, Vol. I, p. 187.

\*\*\*\* "Letters from France and Italy", *Works*, Vol. IV, p. 192.

logic, which had such a great influence on Herzen, knows no other way to the reconciliation (in a higher unity) of two mutually opposing elements of a given concept than their irreconcilable struggle. Hegel himself had a way of looking at the class struggle as an expression of the "vitality principle" (*Prinzip der Lebendigkeit*), which causes social agitation and is nourished by it.\* In rejecting the class struggle following the French utopian socialists, Herzen was *unfaithful to the dialectical method of his teacher*. Naturally, he did not notice this inconsistency himself, but it was there and revenged itself by introducing a certain scepticism in Herzen's attitude to socialism and a feeling of dissatisfaction in his heart.

Herzen believes in socialism. But it is that same Herzen that writes in his diary, for example, confessions like this: "Am reading Volume IV of L. Blanc.\*\* What disgusting rascals Louis Philippe and his government were in the affair of the Duchess of Berry.... In general, the history of these times makes very sad reading, everything is so petty, so commonplace.... Of course, colossal deeds and colossal personages break through at times, but these are exceptions. Such as the bookseller and printer Baude during the first days of the July revolution, some scenes in the history of the Cloître de St.-Mery, Rodde going to sell the poster, the chevalier democrat Ar. Carrel, the Italian Buonarrotti, the ancient of Carbonarism, the great and saintly personality and the fiery temper of Mazzini, and ... and all the futility of their efforts. This throws one back to all the horrors of scepticism" (December 21, 1843).\*\*\* That is precisely the kind of dissatisfaction at which I hinted above, and it stems from the source that I pointed out: a man who had gone through Hegel's school should have made more stringent demands on the socialist idea than those that we encounter in Herzen's discourse quoted above.

## X

In the *Letters Concerning the Study of Nature* we read: "The task of science is to elevate everything that is to a thought. Thought strives to understand, to assimilate the externally existing object, and from the outset begins to reject that which makes it external, different, opposed to thought, i.e., it rejects the object as immediately observable, generalises it and deals with it as something universal: it tries to comprehend it as such. To com-

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\* See his profound remark on the internal strife in the mediaeval towns in his *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte*, ed. by Ed. Gans, pp. 393-94.

\*\* That is, the fourth volume of his *Histoire de dix ans*.

\*\*\* *Works*, Vol. I, pp. 155-56.

prehend the object means to reveal the necessity of its content, to justify its being, its development.”\*

Somewhat later in the book it is said: “for proof consists in revealing the necessity of the object.”

Here again Herzen's reasoning is that of an idealist. But his idealism here is not of the sort that was expressed in the conviction that opinion rules the world. On the contrary, we are dealing here with Hegel's idealism which, as indicated above, could not get along with that conviction. If proving an object means revealing its necessity, “proving” socialism means comprehending it as a necessary product of social development. But what does comprehending it as such a product mean? Does it mean demonstrating its accordance with our own aspirations, sympathies and antipathies? No! Our own aspirations, sympathies and antipathies may in fact prove to be those of a handful of persons without any serious influence on the course of events. Herzen understood that very well. He wrote once: “Our situation is hopeless because it is false, because the logic of history indicates that we are outside the scope of the people's needs, and our lot is desperate suffering.”\*\* And what if the logic of history indicates that socialism, too, is outside the scope of the needs of the peoples of the West? Obviously the lot of West-European socialists will also be nothing but desperate suffering. When Herzen admitted in his diary that the selfless efforts of the revolutionaries and socialists of Western Europe seemed to him to be useless, he was undoubtedly close to such a view of things.\*\*\* But there can be little doubt that such a view was likely to “throw one back to all the horrors of scepticism”. To get rid of these horrors once and for all, one had to demonstrate the theoretical untenability of this view. But how was that to be done? There was only one way, and I have indicated it above. Herzen could only convince himself that socialism did not lie outside the scope of the needs of the peoples of the West if he managed to demonstrate the *objective necessity of social “reform”*. And how could that be done? Here again there was only one way: to abandon the viewpoint of historical idealism. Adhering to the latter, Herzen insisted:

\* *Works*, Vol. II, p. 77.

\*\* *Diary*, April 21, 1843.—*Works*, Vol. I, p. 98.

\*\*\* An interesting detail: although rejecting the class struggle, Herzen was by no means against the revolutionary mode of action at that time. This resulted from the widespread idealist view that great revolutionary movements were not the mutual struggle of two classes, but the struggle of freedom with despotism, of justice with injustice, of truth against error, etc. To the end of his life, Herzen had great sympathy for the Great French Revolution. He evidently failed to grasp its class character clearly, although this had been well enough revealed already by the French historians of the Restoration period—for example, by Augustin Thierry, one of whose works is even discussed by Herzen in a special article (“Stories from the Times of the Merovingians” in Vol. II of the Geneva edition of the *Works*).



We can foresee the future because we are the premises on which its syllogism will be founded." Having abandoned that viewpoint, he would have to say: "We can foresee the future because we see those of its premises that are already to be found in present-day reality." Thus, for him everything would be reduced to an analysis of this reality aimed at revealing these objective premises. But that would involve a radical change in his attitude to the programme of future social reforms. As an historical idealist he believed it possible to *devise* a plan for such reforms: "public management of property and capital, communal life", etc. The criterion for assessing this plan was his subjective views of individual freedom, the rights of the state, etc. If he abandoned historical idealism, the complete inadequacy of this criterion would become obvious immediately. He would then have to analyse the historical conditions of the emergence of the given type of property and those new social phenomena which, little by little, place that type in its turn "outside the scope of the people's needs". Herzen would also have to do the same in respect of all the other points of his socialist programme. He said so himself—true, without realising it—when he studied the "*algebra*" of thinking. He wrote this: "It stands to reason that the idea of the object is not the thinker's exclusive personal property; he did not think it into reality, it was only realised by him; it had pre-existed as latent reason in the immediate being of the object."\* As soon as one proceeded from the "*algebra*" of thinking to the *arithmetic* of social order, one saw the necessary and sufficient condition which a socialist programme had to satisfy: it had to appear not as the "personal property" of a certain social reformer—Saint-Simon, Fourier, Pierre Leroux, Cabet or Proudhon—but as the revelation of the "latent reason" contained "in the immediate being of the object", in the given nature of social relations and the given direction of their development. The truth is that, had Herzen's programme satisfied this condition, he would have been the founder of scientific socialism. But it is also true that the dialectical method could be successfully applied to the study of the law-governed course of social development only after it had undergone a radical transformation, i.e., when Hegel's idealist dialectics gave way to the materialist dialectics of Marx and Engels.

In the meantime, men who had been influenced by dialectics, which considerably increased their intellectual rigorousness, and who had profound theoretical interests in general, had to grapple with a problem of immense significance, one that they could not solve for lack of data. The anguish of that tragedy was in no way abated by the fact that its origins lay in the sphere of

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\* *Works*, Vol. II, p. 78.

theory: the best among the "people of the forties" knew how to link the most profound problems of theory with burning issues of social life.

Those who shake their heads reprovingly about Belinsky's temporary weakness for Hegel's "philosophical cap" mostly hold the comforting conviction that Herzen, at any rate, easily defeated "the evil one" of the cap. This comforting conviction is decidedly wrong; it must be admitted, however, that Herzen himself partially, if unwittingly, helped to form it.

## XI

In *My Past and Thoughts* he says: "The philosophical phrase which has done the most harm and on which German conservatives tried to reconcile philosophy with the political life of Germany, 'all that is real is rational', was the differently expressed principle of *sufficient reason* and of the correspondence of logic to facts. Hegel's phrase, incorrectly understood, became something of a philosophical counterpart of the erstwhile saying of Paul the Christian Girondist: 'There is no authority but that which comes from God.' But, if all authority comes from God and the existing social order is justified by reason, then the struggle against it, if it exists, is justified. Interpreted formally, these two maxims are pure tautology."\*

Our brilliant author expresses himself somewhat carelessly here, and one may get the impression that he is making a logical mistake. From the thesis that *all authority* comes from God, it does not yet follow indeed that *any struggle* against the given authority also comes from God. The same is true of the social order. Herzen's argument, however, should be understood in the much broader sense that, if *all that exists* is rational, then any given struggle against any given authority and any given social order is, also rational. Understood in that way, it is, of course, true. In fact, Hegel was misunderstood by those who, on the strength of his maxim "all that is real is rational", upheld the rationality of all that exists. With Hegel, the concept of the *real* is by no means covered by the concept of the *existing*. But Herzen did not understand him correctly either, in calling his thesis "the differently expressed principle of sufficient reason". This principle is incomparably poorer in content than the thesis. All that exists has a sufficient reason, but not all reasons are "*sufficient*" in the sense that the phenomenon which owes its existence to the reason has to be *real*. The "ancien régime" had existed in France up to the revolution. It goes without saying that there was a sufficient reason for its existence, let us say, in April

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\* *Works*, Vol. VII, p. 126.

1789. But by that time it was no longer *real*, it had become "*phantom-like*" as its time had come to an end. What was real at that time was the *social movement directed against it*, as it expressed the deepest social need of contemporary France.\* According to Hegel, any given social order itself generates, in the *process of its development*, those forces that ultimately destroy it and give an impulse to the emergence of a new order on its ruins. The only negation of that order that is real and, consequently, rational, is one which relies on these forces or, more correctly, is a conscious expression of their unconscious historical action. Belinsky sensed this with his brilliant instinct when he acquainted himself with Hegel's philosophy. His "reconciliation with reality" meant only that he negated any negation that was not based on the law-governed course of social development. His rejection of the "abstract ideal" was due only to his inability to "develop the idea of negation", i.e., to find an objective basis for it. In this he displayed a much deeper understanding of Hegel's teaching on the rationality of all that is real than Herzen who equated this teaching with the "principle of sufficient reason".

As often happens, one mistake led to another. Herzen could put the author of the "system of economic contradictions" on the same level as Hegel only by declaring the great thinker's "philosophical phrase" to be a new formulation of the old idea that there is no action without a cause. In his book *The Poverty of Philosophy* Marx showed that Proudhon's method had nothing in common with Hegel's method. There is absolutely no need to go back to this subject, but here is something that the reader should bear in mind. In criticising the capitalist order, Proudhon argued as an idealist of the first water: he reduced the social reformer's task to preserving the good aspects of the present mode of production and eliminating the bad ones. He did not even suspect that the course of economic development has its own internal ("immanent", as Hegel would have said and as Marx did say) logic which determines both the good and the bad aspects of the social order created by it, and that a given programme of social reconstruction is not utopian only if its realisation is warranted by that objective logic. Here Proudhon repeated the mistake made by all consistent adherents of historical idealism.\*\* But, as we know, Herzen also belonged to their number. And, since he was in that number, he himself lost sight of the need to rely on the objective logic of historical movement. That was why he did not notice that Proudhon's method was completely incompatible

\* That is why Hegel spoke of the Great French Revolution with genuine enthusiasm. I would also like to add that the principle of sufficient reason is one thing and the correspondence of logic to fact—quite another.

\*\* It is of interest that he was introduced to Hegel's philosophy by the German utopian Karl Grün and the Russian utopian Mikhail Bakunin.

with Hegel's method and that was precisely why he did not notice the great difference between the "principle of sufficient reason" and Hegel's teaching on the rationality of all that is real.

Let me say it again: it follows from the above that in *My Past and Thoughts* Herzen displayed a *less profound* understanding of Hegel's method than that displayed by Belinsky at the time of his agonising reconciliation with Russian reality. It is this circumstance that usually wins over those gentlemen who know of "the philosophical cap of Yegor Fyodorych" by hearsay only, and that provides them with a pleasant occasion for thinking that the "cap" had no harmful effect on Herzen. But I would be unjust to the author of the *Letters Concerning the Study of Nature* if I did not attempt to show that he deserved that praise to a considerably lesser degree than is believed. I hope that I have partially carried out this task, but there is one aspect of the problem at which I have so far only hinted and which now should be treated in full.

I mentioned at the beginning of the article that Herzen's unfortunate comparison of Proudhon with Hegel signified the limit of his understanding of his master of philosophy. It should now be added that he had earlier made an extremely interesting attempt to go beyond that limit, and that this philosophical attempt, unsuccessful on the whole, left an imprint on his social views. Barely discernible in the first half of the forties, this imprint becomes quite noticeable towards the end of that decade in works written under the impact of the disastrous outcome of the February Revolution.

In his theoretically pithy article "Buddhism in Science" Herzen quotes the "extremely profound" words of Hegel: "Understanding *that which is* is the task of philosophy, for *that which is* is reason."\* These words of Hegel's express the familiar idea of the rationality of all that is real. But here Herzen does not yet identify this idea with the principle of sufficient reason, as he did later in *My Past and Thoughts*. On the contrary, he interprets it here in the quite correct sense of the *internal* regularity of the historical process, that is, in that very sense in which Belinsky understood it in the late thirties. Of course, there was the difference between Herzen and Belinsky, pointed out above, that they drew diametrically opposed conclusions from this thought: one of them inferred from it (for a while, at least) the inevitable triumph of progressive tendencies, while the other rejected these tendencies (true, for a while as well) as purely subjective. But I have already indicated to the reader that at the time when Herzen began to study Hegel's philosophy it was much easier to understand it in the dialectical (and thereby progressive)

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\* *Works*, Vol. I, p. 364.

sense than in the "absolute" conservative sense. Besides, Herzen's temperament compelled him to take a greater interest in the *practical* inferences to be drawn from the given teaching than in its basic *theoretical* premises. Belinsky was undoubtedly a more "philosophical organisation" than Herzen. Let me note in passing that it was precisely because of this that the "impetuous Vissarion" was so unflinchingly consistent in his practical conclusions, that even Herzen, no craven by a long shot, had to call him a fanatic and a "man of the extreme": a profound interest in theory is perhaps the most important of all the conditions that ensure the consistency of the "practical reason". However that may be, the fact is that Herzen too did not always identify the teaching on the rationality of all that is real with the principle of sufficient reason. He tended to accept this identification only when his philosophical pursuits became a thing of the past and the stupendous events of 1848 and 1849 intervened between him and Hegel, events which disturbed the serenity of thought needed for theoretical studies. But, until he had lived through those terrible years, he was more wont to remember Hegel's precepts, and on such occasions (which is a remarkable feature unexpectedly bringing him closer to the author of the article on the Borodino anniversary) he began to have doubts about socialism as an ideal that has no *objective* foundation, i.e., on such occasions he rejected the abstract ideal himself.

## XII

This is most clearly shown by the chapter "Before the Storm" in the book *From Another Shore*. This chapter is marked December 31, 1847, so that its contents can by no means be explained by the disappointment caused by revolutionary failures. It is indeed tinged with profound disappointment, but not exactly of the sort on which Herzen's biographers are fond of expatiating. It takes but little trouble to become convinced of that.

The article is in the form of a conversation between two Russians both keenly interested in the burning issues of West-European development but differing in their attitudes to the solutions of these issues suggested by contemporary utopian socialism. One of the interlocutors, expressing the mood of the author himself, says, among other things: "*There is no reason to think that the new world will be constructed according to our plan....*"\*

In other words, the law-governed course of historical development in no way guarantees the future realisation of the socialist ideal. Recall now the thesis of the author of the *Letters Concerning the Study of Nature* that "proof consists in revealing the inner necessity of the object", and judge for yourselves Herzen's

\* *Works*, Vol. V, p. 25. Italics mine.—G. P.

attitude towards the progressive ideal of Western Europe *already at the end of 1847*. There can be no difference of opinion here: if there is no reason to think that the new world will be constructed according to our plan, that means we are not convinced of its inner necessity, and without that conviction we cannot prove the object. Thus socialism is something without proof, subjective, not based on the objective logic of social life. That is the tenor of the entire chapter "Before the Storm", and it shows how erroneous the common interpretation of the effect of the *storm* on Herzen is. The interlocutor who is the mouthpiece of our author insistently repeats: "Our civilisation is the flowering of modern life; so who is going to forgo his development? But what bearing does this have on the realisation of our ideals, wherein lies the need for the future to carry out the programme that we have devised?"\*

To say that socialism has not been "*proved*" as the "*necessary*" future, as the consequence of social development; to admit that socialists have "*thought*" their idea "*into*" reality and not discovered it there—all this, for a man who had tasted of the fruit of dialectics, was equivalent to recognising the theoretical untenability of the socialist ideal. And recognition of that untenability inevitably led to disappointment in the ideal. The chapter from the book *From Another Shore* quoted here abounds in evidence of such disappointment. Comparing the position of his associates with that of some prominent figures in the Great Revolution, Herzen, the interlocutor, makes this remark: "The witnesses of all that is past, we cannot share the hopes of our predecessors. Having studied revolutionary problems more profoundly than they did, we demand now more and greater things, whereas their demands have remained just as inapplicable as they were. On the one hand, one observes the logical consistency of the idea, its success; on the other, its complete impotence in the face of a world that is deaf, dumb and unable to grasp the idea of salvation as it is announced to it—either because the idea is poorly formulated or because it has but a theoretical, bookish significance, as did, for example, Roman philosophy that never went beyond a small circle of educated men."\*\*

To the question put by the other participant in the argument: "Which is in the right, the theoretical thought that has also developed and formed itself historically, but consciously, or the fact of the contemporary world that rejects that thought?", Herzen in the guise of the interlocutor gives an extremely characteristic answer: "Both are quite right. All this confusion results from the fact that life has an embryogeny of its own, one that does not coincide with the dialectics of pure reason."\*\*\*

\* *Works*, Vol. V, p. 26.

\*\* *Ibid.*, pp. 29-30.

\*\*\* *Ibid.*, p. 30.

This leads us to the theoretical focal point of the problem. By the dialectics of pure reason Herzen means here the logic of subjective thought which, in his view, is in irreconcilable contradiction with the embryogeny of social life. That is the source of all the confusion. But in what sense is subjective thought right? Obviously it could only be right in the sense that its conclusions were in keeping with its own premises, i.e., in the sense of formal consistency. There can be no question of its corresponding to the law-governed course of social development: Herzen states categorically that there is an abyss between the embryogeny of social life and pure reason, i.e., socialist thought. And that means that subjective thought is wrong from the point of view of Hegel's dialectics which prompted the *Letters Concerning the Study of Nature*. It was this dialectics that gave rise to Herzen's disappointment in West-European socialism. In his *Letters from France and Italy* (Letter IV, dated September 15, 1847) Herzen characterises the position of contemporary socialist schools as follows:

"Attempts at creating a new economic order were made one after another and failed as they ran up against the stone wall of customs, prejudices, factual antiquities and fantastic legends. In themselves they were full of the desire for the common good, full of love and belief, full of morality and loyalty, but they did not know how to build a bridge between universality and real life, between intention and application."\*

All this is simply the familiar demand for "proof" of socialism by revealing its objective necessity. This demand, which then weighed so heavy on Herzen's conscience, shows by its very existence how untenable was his subsequent identification of the sufficient reason principle with the teaching on the rationality of the real. Since socialist thought existed, it is clear that there was a sufficient reason for that (this is even pointed out directly by the other participant in the dialogue "Before the Storm"). But the trouble was that this *sufficient* reason was *insufficient* for building bridges "between intention and application, between universality and real life". It is said that the first *Letters from France and Italy* produced a painful impression in contemporary progressive Russian circles. Some liberal historians of Russian social thought explained this by the fact that in these letters Herzen attacked the French bourgeois *constitution*.... And that seemed out of place in a progressive journal appearing within the absolute monarchy of Russia. This explanation, however, is hardly satisfactory. In any case, it is impossible to be content with it. One must also remember that the progressive Russian circles of the time took an immense interest in utopian socialism, and that Herzen's disappointment in it must have acted on many of his

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\* *Works*, Vol. IV, p. 189.

readers like a cold douche. Herzen wrote, for example: "The present situation in France does not satisfy anyone but the inveterate bourgeois, and even he is afraid to look too far ahead. The cause of dissatisfaction is known to many, the means and mode of rectification, to almost no one—not even the socialists, men of the faraway ideal gleaming faintly in the future."\* That was not the kind of message that would be expected from him by people who took delight in reading the works of "Pyotr the Red-Headed" (Pierre Leroux) and other socialists.

But enough of that. The historical idealist who maintains that opinion rules the world is saying thereby that consciousness determines being, whereas the man who insists that "to prove" an object means to reveal its objective necessity, and that thought has to be *discovered* in reality, not "*thought*" into it, is saying, on the contrary, that thinking is determined by being. We know already that in theoretical philosophy Herzen was content with the idealist solution of the problem of the relation of thinking to being suggested by Schelling and Hegel. We have also seen that in his philosophy of history Herzen, like German Left Hegelians, adhered to historical idealism. We now see that historical idealism proved to be completely incapable of coping with the task of scientific substantiation of the socialist ideal and that Herzen was painfully aware of this inadequacy. There is very little left now for me to add.

### XIII

Firstly. The events of 1848 and 1849 *did not cause* Herzen's disillusionment in Western Europe *but only increased* it, by providing a great deal of irrefutable, as Herzen believed, proof that the socialist thought was in contradiction to the embryogeny of social life. The book *From Another Shore*, so thoroughly misunderstood both in Russia and abroad, was the cry of a man who had become absolutely convinced, to his horror, that the contradiction was insoluble.

Secondly. The problem with which Herzen was struggling in this case and which Belinsky had tried to solve long before him through his reconciliation with reality, did not cease to be a challenge to the progressive men of Russia in later years either. It loomed before them, sphinx-like, seeming to say: "*Solve me, or I shall devour your socialism.*"

Thirdly. Painfully aware of the inadequacy of historical idealism in elucidating the problem of the relation between thinking and being in the history of mankind, Herzen turned naturally if, perhaps, not quite consciously, to historical materialism.

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\* *Works*, Vol. IV, p. 182.



His conviction that communal Russia would realise the socialist ideal elaborated by the individualistic West was an original attempt to solve the very problem which, in his view, West-European thought had failed to solve: the Russian commune played in his semi-Slavophil theory the role of the bridge, which he passionately sought for, "between universality and real life, between intention and application". His appeal to the commune was tantamount to a semi-recognition of the fact that it is not thinking that determines being but being that determines thinking. This semi-recognition was most remarkable, coming as it did from a man who had once stood on the ground of historical idealism, and was very characteristic of Herzen as Hegel's former pupil. It was another manifestation of the fruitful influence of Hegelian dialectics on the minds of the progressive Russian people of the forties.\* However, since the semi-recognition remained what it was, a semi-recognition, it could and did lead only to a utopian solution of the fatal problem.

Fourthly. Herzen's later articles, in which the publicistic vein was so strong, did not touch upon those "prime problems" of philosophy that were the subject of the *Letters Concerning the Study of Nature* and also, to a considerable degree, the articles "Dilettantism in Science" and "Buddhism in Science". Therefore they contain little data for judging the subsequent course of the development of Herzen's philosophical views. Perhaps the most characteristic in this respect is the witty article "Aphorismata. Concerning Dr. Krupov's Psychiatric Theory. Compiled by Titus Leviathansky, Prosecutor and Adjunct Professor", and published in the eighth issue of the *Polyarnaya Zvezda*. This philosophical joke is of interest precisely because it is written by a "prosector et anatomiae professor adj.", that is, by a naturalist, and that, written for the naturalist Schiff, it pleased not only the latter, but also another naturalist, Karl Vogt. It may be assumed that at the time it was written, i.e., the latter half of the sixties, Herzen was no longer content with Hegel's and Schelling's idealist answer to the problem of the relation of thinking to being. By that time he must have known well and shared completely the view which the materialist Feuerbach held on this problem. But the "Aphorismata of Titus Leviathansky" lead one to suppose that Herzen interpreted that view—now and then at any rate—in the sense of the materialism which Marx called natural-scientific in the narrow sense of the word. It is noteworthy that a propensity for this kind of materialism is displayed by Herzen

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\* Herzen's semi-Slavophil theory, however erroneous it might be, was still considerably more profound in respect of theory than the abstract idealist view of the course of human progress to which Herzen had earlier adhered and which was later revived in Russia in P. L. Lavrov's "formula": "Culture is reshaped by critical thought."

already in the chapter from the book *From Another Shore* ("Before the Storm") quoted above, that is, in the work in which he expressed so mournfully his disillusionment with historical idealism. Here is a very instructive passage:

"Every epoch, every generation, every kind of life have had and still have a fullness of their own, new demands and tests and new means are developed en route, some abilities are perfected at the expense of others, and lastly, the very substance of the brain is improved.... What are you smiling at?... That is right, the cerebrine is improved. You idealists are astonished that all natural things go against your grain, just as the knights were once astonished that villeins wanted to have human rights, too. When Goethe was in Italy, he compared the skull of an ancient bull with the skulls of bulls of our times and found that the latter are thinner while the receptacle of the large cerebral hemispheres is more extensive; the bull of ancient times was apparently stronger than that of our day, but the latter has acquired a better developed brain in his peaceful submission to man. Why do you then deem man less capable of development than the bull? This generic growth is no goal, as you believe, but the property of existence of continuously succeeding generations."\*

The improvement of cerebral substance is one of the conditions facilitating progress. That, of course, is a purely materialist conviction. But *in what way* does improved cerebrine facilitate progress? Evidently it must facilitate the emergence in men of more correct views of their mutual relations and, consequently, the perfection of the social order. Thus it leads directly to the improvement of that very "opinion" which "rules the world". In this way materialism is immediately transformed into idealism. That is where the fundamental error of "natural-scientific" materialism lies. It also explains the fact that people who adhere more or less consistently to historical idealism often reconcile themselves easily to this kind of materialism.\*\* When "nat-

\* *Works*, Vol. V, pp. 36-37.

\*\* In my book *N. G. Chernyshevsky*<sup>209</sup> I showed that our famous enlightener, who was on the whole inclined towards historical idealism, became at times in his historical meditations a confirmed follower of "natural-scientific" materialism. I also showed there that he was a faithful disciple of Feuerbach. I will add here that the German followers of Feuerbach, who were also idealists in their philosophy of history, did not at times reject natural-scientific materialism either. In an interesting article "Feuerbach und die Sozialisten" Karl Grün proves, among other things, that philosophy nowadays must not only take the place of religion but become in its entirety the science of practice, the first task of which should be the reconstruction of social relations. He is afraid, however, of being interpreted in the sense that one could now disregard "anthropology and physiology". He therefore makes the reservation that these two green branches of the dead tree of philosophy must be encompassed within the science of practice which will become the "science of socialisation, of uniting" (*Wissenschaft der Vergesellschaftung, der Vereinigung*, italics of the original).

ural-scientific" materialism immediately reverts a man who has become dissatisfied with idealist reasoning to historical idealism, that man must feel rather helpless.\* This was precisely the feeling that Herzen must have had at the time of the "Aphorismata of Titus Leviathansky". There is much bitterness in this witty philosophical joke. "The power and the glory of history are not of reason, neither are they of fortune, as the ancient ballad has it, but of *madness*"—that is the fundamental aphorism of the learned prosecutor and adjunct professor. "Who has built magnificent temples and erected whole forests of marble and porphyry for the glory of God? Who has won all the victories of which men are proud through centuries? Who crowned with laurels warriors fierce and bloodstained, trampling piles of corpses? Who took away the plough from the hand of the people and gave them a sword instead, who made the ploughman of the earth into a ploughman of death, a killer by trade, victor and conqueror, without whom there would have been neither Assyria nor Prussia (habitual caution in respect of censorship compels me constantly to pass in silence over my beloved motherland)?... Who, I ask?... Was it reason?..."\*\* It need hardly be said that, in Titus Leviathansky's view, the cause lay not in reason but in madness. One is unwittingly compelled to remember Herzen's earlier remark on the historical views of the Slavophiles: "there is a mad consequence about it."

Herzen was sometimes called the Russian Voltaire. This is only correct in the sense that, like Voltaire, Herzen was very witty. Herzen's attitude to the accursed problems of his time bore very little resemblance to the attitude of the patriarch of Ferney to the most important problems of the eighteenth century. Generally speaking, a man who had been profoundly influenced by Hegel, could not be satisfied with Voltaire's mode of thinking. It would be more correct to say that in some of his works, e.g., "Dr. Krupov's Notes" and the "Aphorismata of Titus Leviathansky", Herzen reminds one more of Erasmus, the author of the *Encomium moriae*. But it was much easier for Erasmus to laugh at the historical wanderings of mankind than it was for

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(See *Deutsches Bürgerbuch für 1845*, hrg. von H. Puttman, Darmstadt, 1845, p. 66.) Scientific socialism is primarily founded in economics. Attempts to found it in physiology are made in Russian utopian socialism up to and including Mikhailovsky.

\* It is known that Feuerbach himself, while pointing out at times the limitations of "natural-scientific" materialism, at other times seemed prepared to be satisfied with it. In the article on Moleschott's book *The Teaching on Nutrition* quoted above he states categorically: "Der Mensch ist, was er isst" (man is what he eats). That is "natural-scientific" materialism of the first water, and Titus Leviathansky himself would find no quarrel with this kind of materialism.

\*\* *Works*, Vol. X, p. 415.

Herzen: it was not his goal to create the "City of God" on earth. Herzen, the witty author of the "Aphorismata", was literally laughing through his tears.

At one time Herzen reproved the Slavophiles for "scepticism and materialism", for being unable to view history as "the movement of mankind towards liberation". Now he himself, using Titus Leviathansky as his mouthpiece, resolutely rejects this view of historical process.

The adjunct professor of anatomy wants to see madness, which guards and consoles the human race, accompany it in the future until it is annihilated by some geological cataclysm. He says: "And let its triumphant march be preceded, as before, by the *luminary of reason* rushing headlong, now radiant, now hidden by clouds, alternately full and on the wane, keeping, like the moon, the same distance from the globe in whatever hurry it might be."\*

That seems somewhat odd: where did our prosecutor get the "luminary of reason"? Herzen himself informs us that Karl Vogt jokingly called for a reply to Leviathansky "accusing him of concealed deism on the grounds that he hid his God in a lantern that did not exist". Vogt was quite right. Herzen was afraid, however, that his joke would pall on the reader, so he did not dare to start an argument with Titus. A great pity! It would be of considerable interest to know what in fact his objections were as regards the "lantern". Methinks that the "luminary of reason" that always keeps the same distance from the globe symbolised those abstract ideals that are divided from mundane reality by a bridgeless gap. The reader will remember that Herzen pointed out the irreconcilable contradiction between this reality and these ideals already "before the storm", that is, in 1847 (see above). Now we see that it did not cease to torment him in 1867, that is, twenty years later. The morbid doubt that it caused accompanied him, just as woe and misfortune accompanied the good and brave man of the familiar song, from the beginning to the end of his public activity on free Western soil. It left a deep impression on some of his best works. Incidentally, many bourgeois supermen and mere liberal philistines like these works precisely because a note of scepticism with regard to socialism is heard in them. But the time will come when the historians of socialism will grasp at last the true significance of this agonising doubt. They will assign our brilliant author a most prominent position among the writers of the first half of the nineteenth century who sympathised with socialism with all their hearts but realised more or less clearly the shakiness of its *utopian* founda-

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\* Ibid., pp. 415-16.

tions and made attempts to put it on a firm scientific basis, attempts that proved unsuccessful but were nonetheless exceedingly remarkable.\*

#### XIV

That progressive Russian people of the forties could not become the founders of scientific socialism was sufficiently well explained by Russia's economic backwardness and their incomplete knowledge of Western economics. But the fact that these people arrived at a realisation of the inadequacy of utopian socialism was evidence of their outstanding talent. Of great significance here was Hegel's school, of course, which it was their good fortune to have been through. Very many German socialists, however, also had the benefit of Hegel's favourable influence, but of them only Marx and Engels realised how socialism could develop from a utopia into a science. All the other Hegelians (and Feuerbachians) who were keen on socialism were quite content with its utopian foundation. That is why we have every right to believe that our Belinsky and Herzen were incomparably more talented than Grün, Hess, Semmig, Fr. Schmidt and other philosophical socialists of Germany.

A man's philosophy is no better than the man himself, Fichte used to say. These words can well be applied to Herzen. His philosophy was, par excellence, the philosophy of an *active* man. It is interesting to follow in his diary the impression produced on him by reading the great philosophers. His assessment of their theoretical merits is not always free from error and, one may think, too cursory, but he never errs in assessing (and makes extensive commentaries on) what might be called the *active* aspects of their theories. Let us cite Spinoza as an example. His references to Spinoza in the diary do not reveal whether Herzen managed to grasp clearly that aspect of Spinozism for which Feuerbach called Spinoza the "Moses of modern freethinkers and materialists". But it is certainly with great pleasure that one reads in Herzen, for example, these lines about the author of *Ethics*. "Not to mention his teaching in its entirety, let me point out what

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\* Herzen's theoretical tragedy was that, realising the untenability of historical idealism, he could not become a historical materialist. That is quite obvious and extremely instructive. Apropos of this, it is now time to explain what should be understood by his term "realism". Extreme "realism" was the term he used for materialism. It is therefore clear that the word "realism" without the epithet "extreme" in his *Letters Concerning the Study of Nature* denoted a position between materialism and idealism, a position that was not yet sufficiently definite. But, as has already been mentioned, in attacking idealism, Herzen had in mind, properly speaking, subjective idealism. Absolute idealism continued to seem satisfactory to him in its solution of the antinomy between thinking and being. That is what some people fail to understand, those who somehow manage simultaneously to praise Herzen for his inclination towards "realism" and censure Hegel for his "metaphysics".

strokes of genius break through his writing continually, for example: *Homo liber de nulla re minus quam de morte cogitat et eius sapientia non mortis, sed vitae meditatio est...*" (the free man thinks least of all of death, and his wisdom is not in meditations of death, but of life).<sup>\*</sup> Modern religion seekers, such as Mr. Merezhkovsky, who think much more of death than of life, would hardly regard this thought of Spinoza's as a brilliant one. But that is the whole point: to none of them was the name *homo liber* applied, and Fichte is quite right: a man's philosophy is no better than the man himself.

Many years later in the 1864 *Kolokol* Herzen published a series of articles entitled "Letters to an Opponent", containing replies to Y. F. Samarin's published and spoken reproaches.<sup>210</sup> These replies would also displease the ruminating "seekers" of the Merezhkovsky type, who like to chew the cud of ancient theological arguments. Herzen wrote, among other things: "You find it inconsistent, for example, that a man who does not believe in a future life should intercede on behalf of his neighbour's present life. And I believe that *no one but him* can appreciate the *transient* life, his own and his neighbour's; he knows that there will be nothing better than this life for the existing man, and sympathises with all men in their self-preservation. From the theological point of view death does not seem such a great disaster; religious men needed the 'Thou shalt not kill' commandment lest they should start saving people from the sinful body; properly speaking, death makes man his debtor by bringing nearer eternal life. The sin of murder consists not in killing the body, but in wilfully raising the patient's status to a higher level."<sup>\*\*</sup>

This passage, interesting in many respects, is perhaps most interesting in that in its content it is close to Feuerbach's discourse on the incompatibility (for a consistently reasoning intellect; of course) between "idealism or spiritualism" and devotion to political freedom. "The spiritualist," Feuerbach says, "is content with spiritual freedom.... For the spiritualist, political freedom is materialism in the sphere of politics. Material, bodily freedom pertains to real freedom.... The spiritualist is content with freedom in his *thought*." Herzen most probably did not read this particular argument by Feuerbach: it was published only after the German materialist's death in his literary *Heritage* edited by Karl Grün.<sup>\*\*\*</sup> But the idea expressed by Feuerbach here is in such complete agreement with his (*ultimate*) mode of thinking that its af-

<sup>\*</sup> *Works*, Vol. I, pp. 136-37.

<sup>\*\*</sup> See "First Letter to an Opponent", *Kolokol* for November 15, 1864, reprinted in the collection: "*Kolokol*". A. I. Herzen's *Selected Articles*, Geneva, 1887. With a Preface by... L. Tikhomirov, the present editor of *Moskovskije Vedomosti*.

<sup>\*\*\*</sup> *Works*, Vol. II, p. 328.

finitly with Herzen's argument against Samarin is further proof that the *Kolokol* publisher was well acquainted with the author of *The Foundations of the Philosophy of the Future*.<sup>\*</sup> Feuerbach would undoubtedly have recognised as completely justified Herzen's argument that the man who believes in an after-life has no cause to champion his neighbour's earthly life too ardently.

Then follows an extremely characteristic passage that may serve as further argument in favour of the thesis formulated above—that Herzen's teaching on morality contains within it the entire *truth* of the Tolstoyan theory of non-violent resistance to evil. This passage is rather long: but the reader will certainly bear me no ill will for prolonging the pleasure of a direct colloquy with Herzen.

The God-fearing Y. F. Samarin asked Herzen naively what moral punishment he thought fit to be applied instead of corporal punishment, and whether prison, exile, etc., was not corporal punishment. The latter answered that he was no Prince Cherkassky and did not think it necessary to invent birchrods for children or old men, mundane or spiritual birchrods and their equivalents.<sup>211</sup> Samarin reminds him of a man who asks people who are trying to eliminate cholera what they would replace it with. In his justified view, such a question is insoluble.

"Birchrods and prisons, robbing through the courts and compulsory labour for the guilty," he says, "all of these are *corporal* punishments and can only be replaced by a different social order.

"The materialist Owen did not look for criminals, punishments, or equations between fetters and lashings: he thought how to find conditions of life that would not compel men to commit crimes. He began with education; frightened by the absence of punishment for the children, the pietists closed his school.

"Fourier tried to direct for the benefit of society the very passions that cause all criminal outbursts and deviations, when they are in their unbridled and, at the same time, restrained state—people chose to see his funny side....

"Whole countries do not know corporal punishment, whereas in Russia the controversy still goes on, to lash or not to lash? And if to lash—with what? If not to lash—should one cage or chain people?... What is better, birchrods or the cage?

"'Abolition of punishment is impossible', you will say from the point of view of religion that specialises in forgiving everything, forgiving everything. That may be; but it does not follow from this that punishment should be made to appear as justice and not as what it is—a sad necessity, a miserable consequence. There is little need to make a fuss about imputations themselves, there

<sup>\*</sup> [Grundsätze der Philosophie der Zukunft.]

will hardly be a scarcity of them. As long as the legal profession exists, as long as the bloody code of social revenge and the mediaeval ignorance of the masses are there, the surgeon of the law, the executioner, will not die unemployed."\*

All of this is excellent indeed. Herzen, it appears, knew very well the ideas of contemporary socialists concerning the problem of punishment. He would never have believed it, of course, if he had been told that in the not too distant future the entire civilised world would acclaim a certain prophet, as if he were Columbus, who would attire these ideas in a mystic costume and, having added a conservative ornament that destroyed all their intrinsic beauty, proclaim them as his great discovery. He would have thought that the person predicting the appearance of such a prophet was either making fun of him, his listener, or slandering the civilised world....

Let us proceed. I have already said that Herzen was mistaken in regarding Hegel's teaching on the unity of thinking and being as correct. But it would be hard not to acknowledge that he was quite right when he quoted with delight Hegel's meditations on capital punishment. What strikes us most in it? Answering this question, Herzen quotes Hegel at length in German. I shall translate some of the most remarkable of these lines: "We are struck by the sight of a defenceless man who is led out, bound and surrounded by numerous guards, accompanied by the executioner's vile henchmen as well as by clergymen who appeal to him and say prayers which the criminal attends to in order to suppress his awareness of the present moment. The repugnant impression produced by the spectacle of a defenceless man handed over to death by men outnumbering him and armed, at that, does not excite a feeling of indignation in the spectators only because the verdict of the law is sacred to them. And although the executioners serve the law, this circumstance cannot destroy the impression which compels people to brand as vile and contemptible the craft or status of these men who are capable of killing a defenceless person publicly, in cold blood, men who perform their task like blind instruments or the wild animals to whom criminals were once thrown to be torn apart."\*\*

And here is another passage, also translated by myself, which Herzen copied out from Hegel: "He who neglects the finite too much never attains anything real, but remains among abstractions and sinks into himself (*Encycl.*, t. I, § 92).\*\*\* This is worth a whole treatise, which should have been written long ago for the edification of the bourgeois supermen who cannot reconcile them-

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\* The *Kolokol* collection quoted above, p. 517.

\*\* *Works*, Vol. I, pp. 60-61.

\*\*\* *Ibid.*, p. 213.



selves today with the element of the "finite" (which they term philistine) in the great liberation movement of our times.

Finally, one more passage from Hegel's well-known address to his listeners in 1818: "A manly attitude to life, a belief in the strength of the spirit is the first precondition of philosophical studies; a man must respect himself and consider himself worthy of the most supreme. The concealed essence of the Universe does not have a force within it that could withstand the courage of cognition; it must open itself before the latter, reveal its depth and place its riches at its disposal."\* When one comes across such passages from Hegel in this or that person of the forties one begins to understand what an elevating and ennobling effect was produced upon them by that very "Yegor Fyodorych's philosophical cap" which they had every right to attack, since they also had a very deep appreciation of it, and which later our "subjective" ignoramuses could only mock because of their philosophical illiteracy.

On January 8, 1845, Herzen wrote in his diary: "Punishment is a complete absurdity in a well-developed state, and in the future men will wonder how the state could have emulated each villain and perpetrated the same villainy in regard to him as he had, with the difference that he was more or less compelled by the circumstances whereas the government did it without any particular need. Executions are absolute crimes, the poetry of crimes. But where is the genuine infallible measuring rod for what is good for man and what is bad? It is in the very concept of man developing in history, in the historical moment, in the environment in which he has grown up. Everything that develops the integral generic and the individual significance of man is good; and it is bad when the individual, the phenomenal, completely devours the generically human; bad, when the body completely suppresses the spirit, but this, too, cannot be punished (scilicet,\*\* in a well-developed state); such men are contemptible, and it is the task of positive legislation to see that these negative persons do no positive harm, as lunatics, or fools, or animals."\*\*\* These lines were written under Hegel's obvious influence, as well as that of the socialist writers, of course. It is easy to see that they contain all the gold to be found in Tolstoy's so-called teaching on non-violent resistance to evil. Being influenced by Hegel and the socialists, Herzen rejects violence as a means of improving social morals, without, however, touching at all upon the problem of violence as a means of eliminating obstacles in the path of improving social relations, and, together with them, of social mo-

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\* Ibid., p. 209.

\*\* [of course]

\*\*\* Ibid., p. 261.

reality. Those readers who are acquainted with my article "A. I. Herzen and Serfdom" may remember the conversation between the young Herzen and his French teacher Bouchot of Metz.<sup>212</sup> Judging by the very way in which Herzen presents this conversation, one may confidently assume that he understood the great historical significance of the positive solution of this problem.

## SPEECH BY A. I. HERZEN'S GRAVESIDE IN NICE<sup>213</sup>

April 7, 1912

Gentlemen,

Heine says that the history of literature is a vast mortuary where each of us goes to look for the dead that are dear to him. "And when," he continues, "among the many insignificant corpses I see the noble faces of Lessing or Herder there, my heart begins to beat faster in my breast."

Now, on the occasion of A. I. Herzen's centenary, the whole of free-thinking and freedom-loving Russia (and, as you see, not Russia alone) is going into the mortuary on the door of which is written: "*The History of Russian Social Thought*"; and when she sees the noble image of our great writer there, her heart beats faster in her breast, too.

Freedom-loving and free-thinking Russia owes very much indeed to A. I. Herzen. Dostoyevsky once called him a gentilhomme russe et citoyen du monde.\* Dostoyevsky injected a goodly dose of irony into this appellation, but this irony was completely undeserved by Herzen. I am ready to concede, perhaps, that a free-thinking person may partly believe himself to be guilty about belonging to the Russian nobility. It was this estate that made our St. Petersburg history after Peter I, when there were not too many tsars, but mostly tsarinas, a history that bore such a sad likeness to a bloody tragicomedy at a house of infamy; it was this estate that, seeing itself compelled to free the serfs, awarded them puny allotments for their long service, where they could do little but live in want, poverty, hunger and degeneration; lastly, it is this estate that still manages Russia as if she were an occupied country. One may, I repeat, feel guilty, perhaps, about belonging to this worthy estate, but one should also point out some important mitigating circumstances: a man is not born a nobleman, a bourgeois or a peasant of his own choice. Moreover, it does not matter much *what one is born*; it matters far more *what one does and how one behaves in the conscious years of one's life*. It is true that for a man belonging to this or that privileged class it is much more difficult to take the correct view than for the unprivileged;

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\* [a Russian gentleman and a citizen of the world]

but all the more honour to him who succeeds in it. The answer to the question whether Herzen succeeded in it is given by his whole life. His role in the cause of peasant emancipation shows that he was on the side of the exploited, not the exploiters. Dostoyevsky believed that Herzen became a citizen du monde because he had broken away from the Russian people. But Herzen never broke away either from the people or from Russia. He who has broken away from his people does not hold dear their interests, whereas Herzen did hold dear the interests of the Russian people, very much so. It was no lie when he wrote of himself that, ever since childhood, he had had an infinite love for our villages and hamlets. He was a Russian to his fingertips. But his love for his native country did not remain at the level of a dark zoological instinct, which can, as we well know, sometimes manifest itself in a beastly fashion; he raised it to the level of an intelligent human attachment. And in the same degree in which it rose to that level, he became a citizen of the world. His understanding of what intelligent love for one's native country is, is clear from his attitude to the Polish insurrection of 1863.<sup>214</sup> You know it all: men called him a traitor; men reproached him for insulting the feelings of his own people by lending moral support to the Polish insurgents; the vast majority of his recent admirers turned away from him. All this caused him great suffering, but he firmly persisted in his views. He wrote a number of articles: "Vivat Polonia", "Mater Dolorosa", "Resurrexit" and others, full of profound indignation at the cruel suppressors of Poland. He did not believe the "patriotic" stories that the entire Russian people approved of these men. "No, no, no," he exclaims in the *Kolokol*, "the accursed cause of hounding a whole people out of the family of nations is not the common cause of the Russian people!" The Russian people, i.e., in terms of that time the Russian peasants, were too much preoccupied, in Herzen's words, with problems of their emancipation and land settlement to care about suppressing Poland. However, even if they had really demanded her suppression, even if they too had caught the police plague from the upper estates, Herzen would not have stopped sympathising with the Polish insurgents. "We are not slaves of our love for the country," he wrote, "just as we are not slaves of anything else." The free man cannot recognise a dependence on his native land which would make him participate in a cause against his conscience, that was what he said.

These words are pure gold indeed. Each of us should remember them as often as possible now, whether it is a matter of the cruel and disgraceful Jewish pogroms, or the violation of the Finnish constitution, or the law against Ukrainian children being taught in Ukrainian or in general any suppression of any people or any tribe that forms part of the population of our state!

It was said of Herzen that he was ready to give to *Poland* lands which had for a long time been *Russian* and thought of themselves as *Russian*. But, first, was it really appropriate to start a controversy about the future borders of *Rzecz Pospolita* at a time when the Russia of policemen and bureaucrats held Poland by the throat and, pushing her down with a knee against her breast, was ready to strangle her? Second, Herzen's viewpoint on this question was the *viewpoint of national autonomy, the free self-determination of nationalities*. He asked the question: "Why can't we live with Poland, with the Ukraine, with Finland as a free country among free countries, as an equal among equals? Why should we make them all our serfs? What makes us better than them?" This is now the standpoint of the whole of progressive mankind, this is the standpoint of the workers' International.

That is the sense in which A. I. Herzen was a citizen of the world. And one must applaud him, not laugh at him, for being *this kind* of a citizen of the world.

When the Slavophil I. S. Aksakov, having repeated in his organ the vile slander against Herzen, advised him to repent, the latter answered:

"No, Ivan Sergeyevich, if we come back it will not be as prodigal sons or grey-haired Magdalens with head hanging, but as free men demanding recognition of their life's cause, not pardon or forgiveness."

He was fully justified, morally, in writing these proud words, and all of us now, remembering Herzen on the occasion of his centenary, honour his memory in words of complete and unconditional recognition of his entire life, not in words of pardon, condescension or forgiveness.

Gentlemen! Herzen was not destined to return to his native land. And had he lived to this day, he would have had, perhaps, to wander in exile even now. It is not easy to put right something that has gone on for centuries. But let us not lose heart. "Russian life is tenacious!" he said once in his *Kolokol*. He was right here too. It really is tenacious! It will not be killed by men like Purishkevich and Krupensky, Germogen or Rasputin! Russia surges ahead despite everything. She has not yet thrown off her yoke. This yoke still lies heavy on her shoulders. But the idea of freedom has at last penetrated deeply into the people's minds, which was not the case at the time of A. I. Herzen. Were there many people who sympathised with him in 1863, when he rose courageously in defence of Poland? Just a handful. The people really did not care about Poland, at best. At worst, the benighted children of the Russian people were also ready to shout: "Crucify her! Kill the Poles!" And now? The November strike of 1905 was called, among other reasons, because the government had introduced

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copy

Г. П. Плеханов

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Речь на могиле А. И. Герцена  
в Ницце.

(Август 1912 г.)

Гг.

Тейке говорю, что ищущий и  
побратимы сего обширного иноконч-  
ка, в который найдет изъезд  
идеи отыскивать восток и  
использовать. "В и концы - кровопитие  
он, - между многими из нас  
наш труд, в виду того, что  
или Герцен от нас, ищущий  
идеи, в своей руке найдет  
сильно покойный сердце"

~~Вот так~~ Теперь, из сущего и  
идеи со всей радостью А. И. Герцена  
вот счастливый и свободный  
~~двух~~ ~~двух~~ дваму России, - на  
как кудре, и не одна Россия,  
идеи в ту инокончкую на  
жери покойной найдет: "ис-

Page one of the autograph Speech by A. I. Herzen's Graveside in Nice

martial law in Poland. The Russian proletariat thereby demonstrated its ability to take a conscious attitude to the fate of the Polish people. "But the counter-revolution defeated the

proletariat with its demand for free self-determination of the nationalities," I may be told. I shall answer this with the question, "For how long?" Hegel once said that there are epochs when the spirit of world history (in modern language we would say: when the historical movement) hides underground and works there like a mole, undermining the foundation of the existing order. The favourable minute comes—and the obsolete order falls, and we all see how well the mole has worked, and then we all of us shout to it, as Hamlet did to the ghost of his Father: "Old mole! Canst thou work i' th' earth so fast?" Believe me, the Russian mole works very fast indeed. And we are not alone now. In the early sixties the West-European peoples were just beginning to shake off the prostration which afflicted them after the stormy events of 1848-49. And now even the Persians are demanding freedom, even long inert China has started moving and declared a republic. As for the West, there is no need to speak about it at length. The workers' International has grown into a mighty force here. Poland was crushed by military force. The workers' International is a staunch opponent of militarism. In 1848 the German reactionaries used to sing:

*Gegen Demokraten  
Helfen nur Soldaten!\**

Regrettably that was so: soldiers helped to fight the democrats. But now we can sing:

*Gegen Soldaten  
Helfen Sozialdemokraten!\*\**

The working-class movement of the advanced countries now serves as the most reliable guarantee of international peace.

In general, our times are very favourable for the cause of freedom, in the sense that every passing day increases the chances of its final victory considerably. If Herzen lived now, he would not, of course, be disappointed in Western Europe.

He suffered much from his disappointment in it. But even after this disappointment he did not lose his faith in Russia. This day will also revive our faith in the better future of our long-suffering country. Each of us will walk away from his grave, cheerfully repeating his cheerful words: "Russian life is tenacious!", and feeling morally obliged to be the kind of *citizen of the world* that our unforgettable A. I. Herzen was in his time.

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\* [Only soldiers  
can help against the democrats!]

\*\* [Social-Democrats  
can help against soldiers!]

# IV

## [REVIEWS]<sup>215</sup>



## P. Y. CHAADAYEV

M. Herschensohn, *P. Y. Chaadayev. Life and Thoughts*,  
St. Petersburg, 1908

This is an interesting book. It contains even more than it promises; it includes not only an outline of P. Y. Chaadayev's life and "thoughts", but also, in the supplements, his "Philosophical Letters", *The Apology of a Madman*, three letters to A. I. Turgenyev, a letter to Circourt and, lastly, "A Letter to a Stranger". And all of this taken together, Mr. M. Herschensohn's outline and the supplements, throws considerable light on P. Y. Chaadayev's fine personality. Mr. Herschensohn's book *must* be read by anyone interested in the historical development of Russian social thought.

To read a good book, however, does not yet mean to agree with the author on everything. As far as our own assessment of P. Y. Chaadayev's views is concerned, it differs in many points from the one given by Mr. Herschensohn, and we would like to indicate at once where we differ from the latter.

Mr. Herschensohn says that for various reasons Chaadayev's name has become wreathed in legend: "The man who flatly condemned everything about our progressive intellectuals that they held most dear—their exclusively positive trend and political revolutionism—was included in the synodic of Russian liberalism as one of the most glorified figures of our liberation movement" (p. III). This "misunderstanding" began already during P. Y. Chaadayev's lifetime, Chaadayev being too vain, according to Mr. Herschensohn's remark, to reject undeserved laurels, and yet intelligent enough to know their true value. In actual fact Chaadayev was not a politician but a mystic. That is the conclusion to which Mr. Herschensohn comes in his book.

But, if that is true, how did the legend which our author sought to destroy arise and what supported it? How could the misunderstanding have existed for such a long time, a misunderstanding which is called monstrous by Mr. Herschensohn?

The answers to these questions provided by Mr. Herschensohn seem to us entirely unsatisfactory. He says: "This is the result

of a vague conjecture about a truth that is greater than a political one—a conjecture about an eternal truth, about an inner freedom for which, it is true, the external and, consequently, political freedom is only a foundation, but a foundation just as natural and necessary as air is for life. There is no slogan more liberating (even politically) than the appeal: *sursum corda*.<sup>\*</sup> In this sense Chaadayev, who insisted unceasingly on the higher aims of the spirit and created one of the most profound historical generalisations reached by man, is worthy of being remembered by posterity" (pp. III-IV).

Let us dwell on this, for the moment. First, what do the words "exclusively positive trend" mean? Is this a trend alien to all religious elements? If that be so, we shall have to say, for instance, that many of the Decembrists did not belong to this trend at all. Does it follow, however, that it would be wrong to count these Decembrists among the active figures of our liberation movement? Further, was "political revolutionism" characteristic of all the participants in the liberation movement in Russia? Of course not! There were people among them who were striving for political freedom yet at the same time shunned "revolutionism", and there were also people among them who were very much inclined towards "revolutionism" yet shunned "*politics*". Thus the definition given by Mr. Herschensohn here again proves to be too *narrow*, that is, *incorrect*. But let us go still further. In Old Church Slavonic which is more familiar to the Russian reader, the appeal "*sursum corda*" is expressed in the words "*зопѣ имамы серѣца*"! And so we ask, is this appeal a liberating one "even politically"? We believe it is not. The appeal cited by Mr. Herschensohn is too vague to be given an interpretation that would be "even political". It all depends on the way in which men "lift up their hearts". A man may "lift up his heart" and be a sworn enemy of political or any other freedom. Mr. Herschensohn will say perhaps that such a man does not yet know what the real "*sursum corda*" is. But that is the whole point: we mere mortals, unblessed with any supernatural beatitude, cannot know this with certainty. The "eternal truths" of the class to which the "truth" mentioned by Mr. Herschensohn belongs are, in general, very controversial. And it is not enough to "insist unceasingly on the higher aims of the spirit" to become "worthy of being remembered by posterity". One needs something different here. And in any case, Chaadayev has rendered other and far more important services to the Russian liberation movement than his passion for mysticism. For instance, to his dying day Herzen had a great sympathy for Chaadayev, and the reason for that was not, of course, because Chaadayev was a mystic.

\* [lift up your hearts!]

Having described the impression produced on Herzen by Chaadayev's first (and the only well known) "Philosophical Letter",<sup>216</sup> Mr. Herschensohn himself notes: "The author's mood apparently coincided with that of the reader, and the reader did not even suspect that the author's mood was conditioned by causes quite different from his own. Herzen says: 'It was a shot fired on a dark night,' that is true, but Herzen, without asking who was shooting at whom, decided instantly that it was an ally and that the shot had been fired at a common enemy whereas what was common was only the mood, the pain and the reproach" (p. 142).

Well, there was a *common mood*, wasn't there? If that is so, the impression produced on the reader by the author also becomes clear. That is the way it always happens: readers sympathise with those authors whose mood corresponds to their own. And there is no "monstrous misunderstanding" here. True, the mood common to both author and reader here was caused, according to Mr. Herschensohn, by completely different reasons. But was that really so? Is not Mr. Herschensohn mistaken here? In our view, he is very mistaken. Indeed, the mood we are considering here was caused by nothing but a *negative attitude towards contemporary Russian reality*. And that attitude was as characteristic of Chaadayev as it was of Herzen. That was precisely why Herzen's sympathy for Chaadayev was not "fleeting" but constant. Contrary to Mr. Herschensohn's opinion, they both had a *common enemy*, and each of them was "*shooting*" at that enemy to the best of their strength and ability. And when one of them fired an accurate shot, the other could not help feeling glad, could not help applauding him. That was precisely what Herzen did on reading the "Philosophical Letter". Where is the "monstrous misunderstanding" here?

When later Herzen met Chaadayev personally, he saw, of course, that he was dealing with a mystic. But that did not prevent him from considering his ideas to be similar to Chaadayev's, as far as contemporary Russian reality was concerned. The attitude of other members of the liberation movement of the time towards Chaadayev was probably the same: despite his mysticism, they found sufficient grounds to believe him to be one of their own camp.

In another passage in his book Mr. Herschensohn says: "Chaadayev's letters over the last fifteen years of his life show him to be completely engrossed in the struggle against the Slavophiles. He speaks of them continually, on any pretext and at times without any pretext, in all possible tones, from the tragic to the jocular. When he is writing to Schelling, his bombastic speech often flounders into a piteous description of this "intellectual crisis", this "pernicious teaching" of the Russian nationalists.

In connection with Shevyrev's course on the history of Russian literature he writes a lengthy letter to Circourt, in which he uses finely honed sarcasm to dissect the entire absurdity of the Slavophil teaching, as a medical student dissects the muscles of the arm. There is no need to quote these letters: they contain nothing essentially new; Chaadayev expresses sorrow on account of the national self-delusion, mocks the Slavophiles' *retrospective utopia*, their scornful attitude towards Western Europe, etc.... But the main target for his attacks was neither the historical errors nor the reactionary cravings of the Slavophiles: he was most horrified by the atmosphere of national complacency with which they imbued society. Chaadayev, who loved in Russia only her future, i.e., her possible progress, could not observe without pain this spiritual satiety, which was incompatible with any progressive movement and distorted the people's character. This mental attitude seems to him to be a mortal disease threatening to destroy the entire future of the Russian people, and he never tires of watching its manifestations, its pernicious effect on society as a whole and its separate members" (pp. 176-77).

What more do you want, Mr. Herschensohn? You yourself prove quite convincingly that you are all wrong, that is, that there were many things in common in the views of Chaadayev and the progressive men of that time. Chaadayev, in your own words, was a staunch *Westerner* and *progressist*. That is quite sufficient.

It is not enough to say that Chaadayev was a Westerner. One should also add that in his first "Philosophical Letter" he expressed, perhaps more strongly than anyone else, the terrible pain which our sad reality and gloomy history caused in our Westerners. His first "Philosophical Letter" is, in its kind, a highly artistic work, the significance of which has not so far been fully appreciated. One may say without any exaggeration whatever that it was written in his heart's blood. There is no arguing about it: the author's mystical or, one had better say in his case, theological viewpoint is clearly felt in this letter too. The main reason for our gloomy past and no less gloomy present is, in Chaadayev's view, the fact that Christianity came to us from Byzantium.

"Obeying our evil fate," he says, "we turned to pitiful, universally despised Byzantium for the moral code which was to form the basis of our education. By the will of one ambitious man [i. e., Patriarch Photius. — *G. P.*] this family of peoples had just been alienated from the universal brotherhood, so that, as a consequence, we received an idea that had been distorted by human passion. Everything in Europe at that time was animated by the life-giving principle of unity. Everything originated in it and reverted to it.... Estranged from this wonder-making source, we became victims of conquest."

Most members of our liberation movement would refuse to recognise religion as the principal "factor" in mankind's historical development. But what of that? The lines immediately following the ones just cited would again remind these people of the close affinity of Chaadayev's views to their own. Indeed, the "Letter" goes on: "When we threw off the foreign yoke, it was only our estrangement from the common family that prevented us from making use of the ideas that our Western brothers had developed during that time; we fell into an even more cruel slavery, sanctified, at that, by the fact of our liberation." The Slavophiles would never agree to call the order which existed in Muscovite Russia a slavery even more cruel than the Mongol yoke. Reading the "Philosophical Letter", a contemporary Westerner could not help seeing the author as his ally on the question that was then urgent for the Russian intelligentsia, namely the question as to how the relations between Russia and the West should be viewed. The "Letter" gave a categorical answer to that urgent question: our estrangement from the West is the source of all our bitterest sorrows. "The whole world has been built anew," Chaadayev complains, "and we have not created anything; we have vegetated, hiding ourselves, in our huts made of logs and straw. In a word, the new destinies of the human race have come true without us." The truth of this had to be recognised by any Westerner, irrespective of his view of the role of religion in the cultural development of mankind. One is familiar with the remark of a French society lady about Helvétius' book *De l'esprit*. In this book, in the words of that lady, Helvétius "a dit le secret de tout le monde".\* The society lady did not understand a thing in the book by the famous materialist. But it may be said about the first "Philosophical Letter", with full justification and without the slightest possibility of a misunderstanding, that in it Chaadayev has "told the secret of all the Westerners" loudly, clearly, and in excellent artistic form. Chaadayev became their mouthpiece, the lyrical poet of Westernism. That was why he attracted their sympathy, whereas the Slavophiles viewed his "Letter" as something deeply criminal. It was not for nothing that Yazykov regretfully addressed him later thus:

*Defiant son of honoured forebears,  
Proud slave of all things alien!  
You spurned, betrayed all that is yours,  
And yet you have not shown contrition....*

Mr. Herschensohn remarks in connection with this awesome doggerel by Yazykov: "It is easy to understand how absurd this accusation must have seemed to a man who had written that love

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\* ["has told the secret of the whole world"]

for one's native country was a beautiful thing, but that there was something much higher, namely, love for the truth" (p. 174). This remark does not appear to us to be a very happy one either. In this case one cannot oppose love for one's native land to love for the truth. One cannot do so for the simple reason that the "Letter" (just as Chaadayev's Westernism in general) was imbued with a most obvious and a most passionate love for his native country. The "Letter" was written by a man of whom these words by Nekrasov might have been written:

*I saw, having eyes to see with,  
And grieved for my native land.*

In his *Apology of a Madman* Chaadayev describes his attitude to the native country as follows: "More than any of you, believe me, I love my country, I wish her glory, and I appreciate the high qualities of my people; but it is also true that the patriotic feeling inspiring me is quite different from the one whose cries disturbed my quiet existence and threw my boat, which for a while had found refuge at the foot of the cross, once more into the ocean of human vicissitudes. I did not learn to love my country with closed eyes, bent head, and sealed lips. I believe that man may be useful to his country only if he sees it clearly; I believe that the time of blind affection is over, that now, more than anything, we owe our country the truth. I love my country as Peter the Great taught me to love it." You see here that Chaadayev does not oppose love of the truth to love of one's country but presents the former as the element which determines and directs the latter; as for the words "I love my country as Peter the Great taught me to love it", they make one remember N. G. Chernyshevsky, who says in his *Essays on the Gogol Period of Russian Literature* that a Russian must be a patriot in the sense in which Peter the Great was a patriot. It is clear from this attitude to Peter the Great that Chaadayev's social views had many points in common with those of the most progressive of our Westerners. Lastly, Mr. Herschensohn himself quotes Prince Vyazemsky's just remark that "Chaadayev's letter is, essentially, a rejection of the Russia which Karamzin copied from the original", that is, Mr. Herschensohn explains, a Russia "based on the three Uvarov principles"<sup>217</sup> (p. 143). Granted all this, what grounds are there for our author using the expression "monstrous misunderstanding"? It is quite incomprehensible!

We are not forgetting for a moment that in the same "Letter" Chaadayev expresses a negative attitude to the Decembrists' political attempt. In his words, that attempt was "a great misfortune which put us fifty years back". But this view of the attempt only proves that he was not a political revolutionary. We have already said above that many participants in our lib-

eration movement were not political revolutionaries; consequently, Chaadayev's attitude to this attempt, as well as his attitude to the revolutionary movement of 1830, does not confirm Mr. Herschensohn's idea. Besides, one should remember that in his first letter Chaadayev appeared as the lyrical poet of Russian Westernism, and Foscolo rightly said of poets that even when they counsel patience, they rub salt into the heart's wounds because they agitate the heart powerfully. In condemning "political revolutionism", Chaadayev "counselled patience", in a certain sense. But, even in "counselling patience", he powerfully agitated the hearts of those who were trying to win a better future for their country. They did not cease to view him as their ally, and it can hardly be "*due to vanity*" only that Chaadayev himself did not attempt to dissuade them on that count.

The punishment meted out to Chaadayev was fresh evidence for the view of Russia that was expressed in the "Philosophical Letter". Herzen said somewhere (in *My Past and Thoughts*, I believe) that despotism existed in the West too, of course, and yet it never occurred to anyone there to give Spinoza a birching or put Lessing in the army. In Russia both these things would have been done without fail. Here they did even more (if that is possible): they declared a man mad for being so bold as to differ sharply from the official view of Russia. This cruel treatment made Chaadayev a martyr of the Westernist idea. He was sacrificed in the cause of our (*ideological*) liberation movement, and it is natural therefore that his name was entered in what Mr. Herschensohn calls our *synodic*.

Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof! In these days, indeed, a man advocating mysticism could be regarded as a member of a liberation movement only by mistake. In these days a mystic, even one who sincerely sympathises with freedom and is ready to take "militant action" for its sake, would do more harm than good to the cause. In these days a genuine, i.e., consistent, i.e., *non-vacillating*, servant of progress must first of all remove from his world outlook all remnants of obsolete world outlooks; unless this is done, the *vagueness* of his *ideas* will inevitably lead him to *inconsistency in his actions*. In Chaadayev's epoch, however, when the differentiation of our "society" and, consequently, the differentiation in the field of our social thought was far from the stage it has reached now, life did not yet require progressive people to be strictly consistent in their ideas, so that then even mystics like Chaadayev could do the liberation movement a service. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof!

And another point: it was not mysticism that was the dominant feature in Chaadayev's world outlook, but his high demands on the reality surrounding him. All this appears in a quite different light to Mr. Herschensohn, but it is again Mr. Herschen-

sohn's interesting book itself that provides material showing that he, Mr. Herschensohn, is very mistaken.

Indeed, when did Chaadayev's "conversion" take place? According to Mr. Herschensohn's information, it appears to have taken place "about 1820" (p. 34). That is all very well, but what had Chaadayev's views been earlier? Mr. Herschensohn says that earlier "the focus of his world outlook was social interest" and that "he believed that the only sphere of application worthy of a patriot was that which the Decembrists regarded as their duty" (p. 17). And on the same page Mr. Herschensohn quotes a passage from Chaadayev's letter to his brother showing that this was indeed the case. This passage deals with the Spanish revolution; Chaadayev writes (on May 25, 1820): "Another great piece of news, one that fills the entire world: the Spanish revolution is over; the king has been compelled to sign the 1812 Constitutional Act. The entire people rose up, the revolution was played out to the end in three months—and not a drop of blood has been shed, no massacre, no upheavals, no excesses, in general, nothing that might desecrate this fine cause: what do you say to that? Here is a striking argument for the revolutionary cause realised in practice!" This could only have been written by a man who sympathised with the revolutionary movement with all his heart. Now the question arises, what was it, actually, that drove Chaadayev to mysticism? Mr. Herschensohn gives a very vague answer to this question, and it is hardly possible to answer it definitely. All we know is that it was after his "conversion" that Chaadayev read Stilling's works, on somebody's advice, and that these works "caused a profound spiritual crisis in him" (p. 34). But here is something worthy of note. "For these two years," says Mr. Herschensohn, "from retirement to going abroad, Chaadayev felt quite ill.... Chaadayev was evidently by nature an extremely excitable person, and his illness and moral sufferings caused by his retirement and other, probably purely spiritual, reasons developed in him a mistrustfulness and an instability of disposition which made him a real martyr" (p. 35). In a letter to his brother from London dated November 1823 Chaadayev himself thus characterises his morbid state: "My nervous disposition (and I say it blushing) turns every thought into a sensation to such a degree that each time instead of speaking I laugh, cry or gesticulate." In another letter (April 1824) he writes: "I confess (although I know that you do not trust confessions much) that my excitable imagination often makes me misunderstand my own sensations and I begin weeping ridiculously over my condition" (same page). The excerpts from Chaadayev's diary quoted by Mr. Herschensohn produce an extremely distressing impression; these notes appear to be written by a man suffering from a complete psychic breakdown (see pp. 39-43). Chaadayev remained in



this state for a very long time. Even after his return from abroad he remained "a lonely, gloomy misanthrope" who was "threatened with madness and marasmus" (p. 60). According to Mr. Herschensohn, who refers to D. Davydov as his source, Chaadayev later confessed to Count Stroganov that he had written his "Philosophical Letter" when he was in a state of madness and "attempted to take his life during the fits" (p. 60). Of course, *we* take this testimony cum grano salis,\* yet we cannot disregard it entirely; taken together with other data, it convinces us that *Chaadayev's mystic tendencies were the result of a nervous disease* that was, perhaps, partly caused by organic predisposition, but mainly by the painful impressions from his surroundings. Speaking of the surroundings, we have in mind *not only our Russian reality*, which later compelled the young Herzen to ask himself, in the *Diary*, the question, "*why have we awakened?*" No, at the time of Chaadayev's voyage abroad freedom-loving people in the West were also having a hard time: it was the very height of the reaction that descended on Western Europe in the wake of the Great French Revolution. Quinet says that all the great Italian writers of the early nineteenth century were pessimistically minded. But this was not the case in Italy alone; suffice it to recall Byron. True, freedom-loving people in the West, generally speaking, did not succumb easily to the influence of mysticism: there mysticism was primarily the domain of the reactionaries. But this is explained by the fact that, owing to the greater development of West-European social relations, the correspondence between the *social tendencies* of thinking people and the *theoretical foundations of their world outlook* is always much greater there. He who neglects this circumstance will never understand how it is that at the present time, for instance, many of our "*Marxists*" (ahem!) go in for Kantianism, empirio-monism and other philosophical systems that express a more or less *liberal* (or more or less *conservative*, take your choice of the expression) state of the mind of the present-day West-European *bourgeoisie*. This is hardly the place to deal with that at length. The fact is that in the West, too, Chaadayev could not find lasting consolation for his sick soul. And he could not help looking for it; but the more assiduously he looked for it, the more defenceless he became before mysticism. For him mysticism played the same part as vodka does, regrettably, for so many "Russian" people—it was a way to oblivion. But vodka does not eliminate the factors which cause the moral sufferings of the drinker. Nor could Chaadayev find in mysticism the satisfaction which he could have found *in social activity only*. And precisely because mysticism could not satisfy

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\* [with a grain of salt]

Chaadayev's desire for social activity, this desire lent a very original tinge to his mysticism.

Social interest frequently comes to the fore even in Chaadayev's religious arguments. In his first "Philosophical Letter" he says: "In the Christian world everything must necessarily lead towards the establishment of a perfect order on earth and it does indeed contribute to this; otherwise our Lord's word that He will be with His Church to the end of time would be denied by the facts." This is most characteristic of Chaadayev's mysticism. Compare this mysticism with Count Tolstoy's religious world outlook, and you will see that religious tendencies in themselves do not determine a man's disposition. Chaadayev's mysticism justifies preoccupation with "the establishment of a perfect order on earth", whereas Tolstoy's religion insists that "the Kingdom of God is within us", and turns its back on all the social tendencies of its time. And we know that Tolstoy, too, "has lifted up his heart". Chaadayev's mysticism is not at all like Tolstoy's religion. We hope that this will not be denied by Mr. Herschensohn either, who calls Chaadayev's mysticism a *social* mysticism. We believe it would be better to call it *a mysticism caused by the unsatisfied desire to introduce reason into the life that surrounded him*.

But, if *that* was what his mysticism was about, it is perfectly clear that the author of the "Philosophical Letters" not only can but should be counted among the active participants in our liberation movement.

Mr. Herschensohn seems to recognise it himself, in the last analysis; but, firstly, he recognises it with inadmissible reservations; secondly, he does not notice that this contradicts fundamentally his own idea that the active participants in our liberation movement regarded Chaadayev as one of them only through a monstrous misunderstanding. He says: "Taking into account the direction which Chaadayev's thinking took in the early twenties, social interests were, of course, bound to recede into the background, but they could not fade out entirely. Chaadayev's entire mentality was rooted in the soil of the Alexandrian times, and up to his mature years it was fed by the same juices which nourished the men of December 14. People of his generation, his friends and those of his age, knew only one passion and had a single goal in life—the public interest, and we have seen that Chaadayev was like this in his St. Petersburg period."<sup>218</sup> All his life he was to remain like this, and everything that he was to do had as its goal society, not the individual. His civic feelings remained strong in him even at the time when he became engrossed in the search for religion: a guarantee of that was his prolonged association abroad with N. I. Turgenev, a typical one-track mind of the liberation movement" (p. 61). Splendid! But if a man, whatever he might do, always has society in mind, can one say that social interests have

receded into the background for him? Common sense says no. Mr. Herschensohn himself hastens to mention a fact that decides this controversial point most definitely, without leaving the slightest room, as it were, for appeal. Here is the fact. Sverbeyev says that when he met Chaadayev during the latter's voyage abroad, that is, at the time of his deepest preoccupation with mysticism, Chaadayev spoke of our contemporary situation as follows: "In his sharp outbursts he did not conceal his profound contempt for our entire past and present and certainly despaired about our future. He called Arakcheyev a villain; the supreme authorities, both military and civil, bribe-takers; the nobility, vile lackeys; the clergy, ignoramuses; the rest, stagnant, servile slaves" (p. 61). A man for whom social interests have receded into the background would not have spoken thus. No, even as communicated by a third person, his speech shows the warm feeling of a person who is interested in social questions *first and foremost*. That is precisely the feeling which found an outlet in the first "Philosophical Letter" and which made this letter like a terrible denunciation, a revolutionary's fiery speech.\*

Mr. Herschensohn asks himself, "is this the right time to remind Russian society of Chaadayev?", and he answers, "Yes, I believe so, and now more than ever". For our part, we believe it is quite appropriate now to remind the reading public about Chaadayev. But Mr. Herschensohn's arguments in this connection, we must admit, seem to us to be extremely unfortunate. He writes: "The entire totality of his [i.e., Chaadayev's—G. P.] thoughts tells us that the political life of the peoples, in striving to attain its temporal and material goals, in actual fact only realises partially the eternal moral idea, namely, that any social action in its essence is no less religious than the believer's passionate prayer. He tells us of social life: enter, and God is here; but he also adds: remember that God is here and that you serve him" (p. IV). These arguments are evidence of Mr. Herschensohn's touching piety rather than of

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\* Footnote from the collection of articles *From Defence to Attack*.—Regretably, this feeling in Chaadayev did not always go hand in hand with courage. In a letter to Count A. F. Orlov he renounced, in a most shameful manner and without even sufficient external cause, Herzen, who referred to him with sympathy in his brochure *Du développement des idées révolutionnaires en Russie* (1855). Chaadayev tried to convince Orlov that he, Chaadayev, could not remain indifferent "when an insolent refugee (sic!), distorting the truth in a most vile manner", attributed "his own sentiments" to him and threw "his own shame" on his name (see this letter in M. Zhikharev, *Pyotr Yakovlevich Chaadayev in Vestnik Yevropy*, 1871, September, p. 50). This astonishing letter was written in the same year, 1851, in which the self-same Chaadayev wrote a very friendly letter to the self-same Herzen abroad. When M. Zhikharev reproached Chaadayev for "unnecessarily cheap behaviour", the latter objected: "Mon cher, on tient à sa peau" ["My friend, one holds onto one's skin"] (ibid., p. 51). A pitiful attempt at justification!

his clear understanding of the role of the religious "factor" in the history of mankind. It is useful to recall Chaadayev not because "God is here", etc., but because we are now living through a period when some exaggerated social expectations are being disappointed, and such periods always favour greatly the spread of mysticism. There are grounds for believing that a strong wave of mysticism is spreading through the Russian intelligentsia: it is no accident that our "lovers of fashionable arguments" begin, albeit with an air of innocence, to think up new or, better say, warm up old religions (see the religious revelation of A. Lunacharsky the prophet in the *Obrazovaniye*).<sup>219</sup> Chaadayev's example is excellent in that it demonstrates the complete untenability of mysticism as a means of solving social tasks not yet solved by life. From this point of view Chaadayev's life and "thought" are particularly instructive. It is a pity, though, that this aspect is not sufficiently elucidated in Mr. Herschensohn's book.

Let us try to elucidate it ourselves.

Chaadayev's first "Philosophical Letter" is permeated with a most profound pessimism about Russia's historical destiny. "Where are our wise men," he asks there, "our thinkers? Who has ever thought for us, who thinks for us today? Standing between the two principal parts of the world, between the East and the West, supporting ourselves with one elbow on China and the other on Germany, we should have united within ourselves the two great principles of spiritual nature, imagination and common sense, and incorporated in our civilisation the history of the whole globe. But that is not the role allotted to us by Providence. Moreover, Providence does not seem to have concerned itself with our fate at all. Having excluded us from its beneficent action on the human intellect, it has left us entirely on our own, has refused all involvement in any of our affairs, and has not cared to teach us anything. Historical experience does not exist for us; generations and ages have flowed by fruitlessly for us. Looking at us, one might say that the universal law of humanity has been revoked, as far as we were concerned. Alone in the world, we have given nothing to the world, have taught it nothing; we have not contributed a single idea to the fund of human ideas, have not in any way assisted the progress of the human intellect, and we have distorted everything that we have received from progress."

This is the extreme in pessimism, and it is not surprising that Chaadayev comes to this conclusion: "There is something in our blood that is alien to any real progress. We have lived and we go on living only to serve as some significant lesson to remote generations that will be able to comprehend it; as for the present, we do not amount to anything in the spiritual world order." Cheerless as this conclusion may be, had social interests really faded into the background with Chaadayev under the influence of mysti-

cism, he would have obeyed the will of Providence, which did not want to "concern itself" with our fate. Gagarin, having found peace in Catholicism, could hardly have reflected much on the future fate of Russia. And that is the whole point: social interests remained in the foreground with Chaadayev, and he therefore could not reconcile himself with Providence's "lack of concern" with us. So, again and again he goes over our past in his mind until, at last, he discovers in it a feature which promises us a very bright future. And strange to say, this feature turns out to be the very isolation of Russia which Chaadayev had formerly seen as the principal cause of the fruitlessness of our history and the most convincing argument in favour of the idea that Providence did not consider it necessary to concern itself with us.

Chaadayev's new view of Russia's future was expressed for the first time in Yastrebtsov's book *On the System of Sciences Which Are Now Suitable for the Children Intended for the Most Educated Class*. The second edition of the book appeared in 1833, and, in Chaadayev's words, the pages devoted in it to Russia's possible future had been dictated by him. Mr. Herschensohn summarises the content of these pages as follows:

"Culture, the result of the collective work of all the previous generations, is given to every newcomer free. Happy is the people therefore that is born late: it inherits all the treasures accumulated by mankind; without labour or suffering it acquires the means of material welfare, the means of intellectual and even moral development, obtained at the price of countless errors and sacrifices, and even the misconceptions of earlier times may serve as useful lessons for it. Such is the position of Russia: in many respects she is young, compared with Europe, and, like North America, she may inherit the riches of European culture free.... But in the heritage received by Russia truth is mixed with error. It cannot be accepted indiscriminately; one must separate the chaff from the genuine good grain and use only the latter. And here lies the main foundation of our patriotic hope: Russia's great advantage is not only that she can appropriate the fruit of the labour of others, but also that she can borrow with complete freedom of choice, that nothing prevents her from choosing the good and rejecting the bad. Peoples with a rich past are deprived of this freedom, as the people's past life deeply affects its whole existence" (pp. 150-51).

Chaadayev expresses himself in the same vein in a letter to A. I. Turgenev in 1832. "A short time will pass," he says there, "and, I am certain, great ideas, having once overtaken us, will find a more fertile soil here for their realisation and embodiment in people than anywhere else, for they will encounter neither ingrained prejudices, nor old habits, nor diehard routine to oppose them."

Finally, the same idea is repeated almost literally in the *Apology of a Madman*, written in 1837. However, there Chaadayev expresses somewhat more definitely what he expects from Russia. "I have a deep conviction," he adds there, "that we are called upon to solve most of the problems of the social order, to accomplish most of the ideas which originated in the old societies, and to solve the most important questions with which mankind is preoccupied."

If the reader recalls the quite recent arguments of our Narodniks and subjectivists concerning Russia's possible economic future, he will see that they contained very little that was new: there was the same conviction that Russia has a "complete freedom of choice"; there was the same conviction that the "complete freedom of choice" is the result of our backwardness; finally, there were the same references to Peter the Great, who allegedly showed us by his own example that we indeed possess that freedom of choice. Thus we are faced with something unexpected: Chaadayev turns out to be the father of our Narodnik movement and our subjectivism. Mr. Herschensohn says so outright: "Chaadayev's ideas filtered through Herzen into the Narodnik movement, as they did through Solovyov into the contemporary Christian social movement. In neither case can one speak of direct borrowing, but at any rate both these movements go back to Chaadayev's teaching" (p. 170).

But, if that is so, where does "the idea of the immanent activity of the spirit of God in the history of mankind" come in, the idea which constitutes, in Mr. Herschensohn's words, "the very core of Chaadayev's teaching" (p. 144)? Neither Herzen, nor the Narodniks, nor N. Mikhailovsky and his ideological allies entertained this idea in the least degree, yet they came to the same conclusion as Chaadayev did. Is it not clear that the point here is not "the idea of the immanent activity of the spirit of God", but something quite different, something that Chaadayev had in common with many Russian "intellectuals" who did not share his mystic views at all? What was that something? It was, purely and simply, the mode of thinking of the "intellectual" who is incapable of reconciling himself with the reality around him, who strives for a radical transformation of this reality... and who has not the faintest idea that *the development of this reality has its own objective logic, which is independent of the subjective logic of the intelligentsia and, moreover, itself determines, in the final analysis, even the requirements of this subjective logic both in their weak and strong points.*

Chaadayev's novel view of Russia's possible future was worked out by the same mode of thinking that was peculiar to *all the utopian reformers*. Utopian reformers generally proceeded from the tacit assumption that each given country at each given moment determines by itself, and consciously, its further course of development. He who finds this thesis correct (a thesis that is merely

a modification of the *idealist explanation of history*, according to which "opinion rules the world"), he who finds this thesis correct concludes quite naturally that any given backward country is quite capable of profiting from the "lesson" of the more advanced countries and may, by bypassing the more or less bumpy path of their internal development, leap into a most enviable future in a few powerful bounds. But to think so is to regard the isolation of a given country and its backwardness generally as a sure guarantee of its future progress.\*

The French Saint-Simonists believed that France could avoid English capitalism by profiting from England's experience interpreted by the "new philosophy", that is, the teaching of the Saint-

\* Footnote from the collection of articles *From Defence to Attack*.— However, a reservation must be made here. Chaadayev has a place in the history of Russian social thought as the author of the first "Philosophical Letter", and not as the author of the "Apology of a Madman" or a thinker who had a more or less strong influence on Yastrebtsov, who wrote the study *On the System of Sciences Which Are Now Suitable for the Children*, etc. M. Zhikharev, who knew Chaadayev well, insists that in his *Apology* the latter made concessions "which he should not have made from his viewpoint and the truth of which he did not believe himself" (ibid., p. 37). He does not say anything about Chaadayev's attitude towards Yastrebtsov. Mr. Herschensohn discusses this attitude in great detail (see p. 149 et seq. of his book). He points out that "later when the storm broke out over Chaadayev's 'Philosophical Letter', he sent Yastrebtsov's book to Stroganov in an attempt to vindicate himself", asking the latter to read the pages, marked there, which he had dictated. But Chaadayev's attitude to Yastrebtsov has not been elucidated thoroughly enough. As for the letter to Stroganov, it may have presented this attitude in a false light under the impact of fear (Zhikharev bears witness that Chaadayev was very much at a loss then). Furthermore, this letter, which points out the advantages of our isolated position that Chaadayev then allegedly viewed as "the basis of our success later", must necessarily be compared with Chaadayev's letter to Princess S. S. Meshcherskaya of October 15, 1836 (the letter to Stroganov is dated November 8 of the same year). Chaadayev wrote to Meshcherskaya after the appearance of the "Philosophical Letter" but before the catastrophe that followed. It is noteworthy that it does not mention any changes whatever in Chaadayev's views on Russia. Mr. Herschensohn should have paid more attention to this point. Similarly, in a letter to I. D. Yakushkin, Chaadayev does not say a single word about any changes in his views when he describes the affair started by the appearance of his "Philosophical Letter" (see *Vestnik Yevropy*, 1874, Issue 7, the article "Unpublished MSS by Chaadayev"). In a letter to Schelling of May 20, 1842 Chaadayev ridicules the Slavophiles' "retrospective utopia", according to which we "anticipated the course of mankind and have already realised in our midst audacious theories", i.e., those of West-European socialism proper. In a letter to Count Circourt of January 15, 1845 he repeats the same ridicule. That is why we believe that the conclusion to which Mr. Herschensohn came and which forms the basis of further discussion in our article is still subject to revision. Fresh studies may show that Chaadayev never adhered seriously to the idea of the "advantages of our isolated position". Let us add that we now entertain some doubts on this question, assuming that it will be solved finally by future research, whereas earlier (before the appearance of Mr. Herschensohn's book) we believed, like Herzen did, that Chaadayev's view of Russia was always the direct and complete opposite of the Slavophiles' and Narodniks' views of Russia. We have expressed this view in print, too.

Simonists themselves. Later the German "true socialists" attempted to convince Germany that she need not follow the example of the "Western countries" in this respect. Our Narodniks and subjectivists held forth on this subject more loudly, at greater length and more insistently than anyone else.\* It goes without saying that the less significant arguments supporting this basic thesis varied in accordance with the economic and political peculiarities of the country where it was advanced. But the basic thesis itself remained essentially quite unchanged and was merely a translation into the language of political economy of a general historico-philosophical idea at which Chaadayev, too, arrived. In arriving at that idea Chaadayev proved to be original only in comparison with contemporary Russian publicists, perhaps. In the West, this idea would hardly have seemed novel to anyone.

It is most remarkable, however, that in expressing this idea Chaadayev approached closely (at any rate, from the formal aspect, i.e., from the point of view of his mode of historico-philosophical thinking) those very Slavophiles, whose teaching he disliked so much and whom he fought, as we already know, all through the last period of his life. When the Slavophiles blessed our "salutary immobility", they reasoned in precisely the same way as Chaadayev. Moreover, it should be admitted that there were more utopian elements in Chaadayev's hopes than in Slavophile reasoning, though ever wild this reasoning sometimes was.

The point is that the Slavophiles already had a more or less vague understanding of the fact that the various aspects of social life were connected with each other by a bond that could not be disrupted at the will of the intelligentsia. Chaadayev (just as the Narodniks and subjectivists later) had no inkling of the existence of such a bond or else forgot about it when he thought of the future of Russia. That was why the Slavophiles were often quite right in their criticism of Westernism as it manifested itself in the utopias of Chaadayev, the Narodniks and the subjectivists.

I. S. Aksakov, confusing the Narodniks and liberals, wrote that in our liberal press "the people exist only in one aspect, namely, the economic one ... as for the other aspects of their being ... all this is either hateful to them, or profoundly antipathetic to and disdained by them."\*\* That was indeed so or almost so. As long as they adhered to the utopian standpoint indicated here, our Westerners did indeed single out arbitrarily the separate aspects of the people's life, imagining naively that the given aspect, for some reason sympathetic to them, could be dissociated from the influ-

\* Let us add, for fairness' sake, that N. G. Chernyshevsky, too, repeated on more than one occasion that "he lives well whose granny does fortune tell", meaning that "the backward peoples are fortunate in that they may profit by the experiences of the advanced peoples".

\*\* See I. S. Aksakov, *Works*, Vol. II, p. 621.



ence of all the other aspects and directed along the path of "normal" development. The only difficulty was in thinking up a good programme of action for the progressive intelligentsia. I. S. Aksakov was also right when he said that "the similarity between some of the teachings imported from the West and the Russian people's everyday views" (he had in mind, on the one hand, the Russian commune, and on the other, the Western type of commune and the "phalanstery") was a purely external similarity. Lastly, he was also right when he pointed out to our "liberals" that the *economic* aspect of our people's life favoured by them (that is, the land commune again) was organically linked with our political system. By arguing in this manner, he left the domain of utopia, from which our socialists of the Narodnik and "subjective" trends could not then escape try as they could.

The Slavophiles sensed earlier than the Westerners the need for appealing to the inner objective logic of our social development. This appeal, however, brought them to a point at which the *founding fathers* of Slavophilism, at any rate, had no intention of arriving.

In August 1862 I. S. Aksakov wrote in his *Dyem*: "We would like everything directly promoting our *material* well-being to be the principal, if not exclusive, subject of legislative cares and goals, and the activity of the mind to be given ample scope simultaneously."

In the programme thus outlined, only this hope for "the activity of the mind to be given ample scope" was utopian. As for its *economic* aspect, I. S. Aksakov's ideal was, one might say, *a thing of the future*. The Slavophil publicist interpreted care for material well-being mainly as the development of a railway network, the discovery of new markets for industry, protective tariffs, etc. In proposing such a programme, our Slavophiles themselves were pushing Russia to the path of capitalist development, on which the "rotten" West had embarked much earlier than we did, and which could not fail to lead to a negation of our "uniqueness", so dear to the Slavophiles. Depeople the people, wrote the self-same Aksakov, and Westernism will have a meaning in Russia. But capitalism did precisely that. It destroyed our old "uniqueness" and thereby prepared the ground for the emergence of such Westernist trends in Russia which did not need utopianism in order to exist. I. S. Aksakov believed that West-European socialism was the logical conclusion of the history of Western Europe. In his view, socialism was quite at home in the West; socialists were the children of modern civilisation, whereas "Asia was no place for them".\* That again was beyond argument. Since Russia remained

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\* *Rus*,<sup>220</sup> March 15, 1883. The article from which we quote these passages was reprinted in Vol. II of I. S. Aksakov's *Works*.

"Asia" economically, only utopianists could make plans for realising the West's progressive ideals there. But the programme suggested by I. S. Aksakov eliminated "Asia" and thereby took the ground from under the Slavophiles' feet.

Such was the bitter irony of the history of our internal development! *Slavophilism cleared the path for the triumph of Westernism, which was hostile to utopias, by proposing a programme that brought us closer, in the economic respect, to the "rotten" West.*

At the time when Chaadayev was giving battle to the Slavophiles, all this, it is true, was still a very long way off. Slavophilism was still entirely free from *capitalist* tendencies, whereas Westernism of all shades was firmly planted on *utopian* soil. Belinsky alone made an attempt to elaborate a *scientific* view of the origin and properties of our reality; Belinsky alone realised that the *negation* of "base Russian reality" must rest on the *logic of its own internal development*. His attempt, however, was doomed to failure owing to a complete lack of data for the correct solution of this extremely important question.\* Nonetheless we believed it useful to indicate here the irony of life mentioned above, to remind the reader that life took very little notice of what certain groups of our intelligentsia would have liked "*to choose freely*". Life had a logic of its own, an *objective* logic. While the subjective logic of groups of the "intelligentsia" had a very slight influence on its frequently ironical conclusions, the influence on it of that element in Chaadayev's views which Mr. Herschensohn characterises with the words "and God is here", was, indeed, equal to zero. Mysticism was for Chaadayev a narcotic which partially relieved his moral suffering and alleviated (for a while!) the symptoms, so familiar to a Russian intellectual, of the moral disease of *hopelessness in the struggle against the social evil*. But it did not throw a ray of light, not a single one, on the road that might lead to the elimination of evil. And it could not do so! By its very nature, it could only hinder the discovery of this road, diverting the attention of the highly talented man carried away by it towards a path running in the opposite direction to the one which should be taken. Westernism will triumph in this country (and partially *does triumph already, malgré tout!*\*\*), only not under the aegis of *mysticism*, but that of *materialism*.

In conclusion, one more short remark to Mr. Herschensohn. He is very mistaken, as Pypin was at one time, in regarding Herzen's *Letters Concerning the Study of Nature* as a *materialist* work (p. 187). Loin delà!\*\*\* For Mr. Herschensohn to make certain that this is indeed so, we recommend him to take up Volume II of

\* On this point see our article "Belinsky and Rational Reality" in our symposium *Twenty Years* [Works, Vol. X].<sup>221</sup>

\*\* [despite everything!]

\*\*\* [Far from that!]

Herzen's *Works* published abroad (this volume contains, among other things, the *Letters Concerning the Study of Nature*) and to read pp. 259, 260, 282 and 292 there: he will see that Herzen was not a materialist at the time when he wrote the said *Letters (according to Hegel)*. Mr. Herschensohn may convince himself of the same thing in another way, too: by re-reading Herzen's *Diary*, published in the *first* volume of the same edition. The *Diary* shows that in 1844, when he started on his *Letters*, Herzen still vacillated between idealism and materialism and was closer to the former than to the latter. He speaks of nature there as follows: "In nature, the idea exists bodily, unconsciously, subject to the law of necessity and to dark urges not superceded by free comprehension" (p. 377). Let Mr. Herschensohn judge for himself if that is materialism.\*

It is high time that we, at last, had a better knowledge of the mode of thinking and the history of the intellectual development of our people of distinction.

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\* Owing to the vagueness of his point of view, Herzen speaks very vaguely in his *Letters Concerning the Study of Nature* of the relation of thinking to being; this vagueness is reminiscent of Jos. Dietzgen, whose philosophy is decidedly lacking in a clear understanding of this subject.

## ON M. HERSCHENSOHN'S BOOK *THE HISTORY OF YOUNG RUSSIA*

*The History of Young Russia, Moscow, 1908*

"Every Russian should know the history of Russian social thought," says Mr. M. Herschensohn. This is most true, and we are duly thankful to Mr. M. Herschensohn for doing some diligent research in that history. It is a pity, though, that Mr. M. Herschensohn adheres to a viewpoint that at times prevents him from discovering the inner connection between the phenomena which he is considering.

How harmful this viewpoint is, can be seen from the description of A. N. Rayevsky's personality in the essay "M. F. Orlov".\* Mr. M. Herschensohn does not like A. N. Rayevsky. Why is that? "Rayevsky," says he, "was, of course, very clever" (p. 40). But he had a fault that was unpardonable, according to Mr. M. Herschensohn: he was incapable of feeling "the power and the beauty of the irrational in the world", and that circumstance is responsible for the fact that his powerful mind did not bear the fruit it could have borne, had his attitude to the "irrational" been different. Mr. M. Herschensohn writes: "But a mind incapable of feeling the power and the beauty of the irrational in the world is a platitudinous and meagre mind, and such was Rayevsky's mind, for all its acuteness. The highest spheres of the human spirit were closed to him" (p. 41). To prove that, our author quotes Vigel, who says in connection with Rayevsky's attitude to Pushkin: "Poetry was something entirely alien to him, as were tender feelings, which he regarded as nothing but ridiculous antics" (ibid.). Strange as I find this reference to Vigel, who could hardly be considered a competent judge of "poetry" and "tender feelings", I am prepared to admit, however, that Rayevsky's poetic feeling was but little developed. And I am, of course, prepared to admit that this is a great defect. This undoubtedly great defect, however, did not make matters as bad as Mr. M. Herschensohn would like to insist that

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\* This book by Mr. M. Herschensohn consists of a number of essays: 1) "M. F. Orlov"; 2) "V. S. Pecherin"; 3) "N. V. Stankevich"; 4) "T. N. Granovsky"; 5) "I. P. Galakhov"; 6) "N. P. Ogarev".

it did. For instance, we learn from Mr. M. Herschensohn the following extremely interesting fact, which he borrows from Lorér's notes. During the investigation of the events of December 14 Nicholas said to Alexander Rayevsky: "I know that you do not belong to the secret society; but, as you had relations and friends there, you knew everything and did not inform the government; where was your oath?" A. Rayevsky boldly answered to that: "Sire! Honour is more precious than the oath, a man cannot exist if he loses the former, he can do without the latter" (p. 49). I venture to think that "the highest spheres of the human spirit" were not entirely closed to a man capable of such sentiments. Mr. M. Herschensohn may object to this that *honour is not a sufficiently "tender" feeling*. I shall then remind him of A. Rayevsky's life in his estate Boltyska near Poltava, where he was exiled from Odessa by imperial order for his relations with Countess Vorontsova. He spent three years there. "During that time," Mr. M. Herschensohn tells us, "there was an outburst of cholera in Boltyska, and he did everything possible to fight the disaster, sparing no labour and caring but little for himself" (p. 74). We learn again from Mr. M. Herschensohn that one of A. Rayevsky's acquaintances remarked in this connection that, although Pushkin called him a demon, his serfs in Boltyska called him an angel (ibid.). What does our author think about that? Here is what he thinks: "The unselfishness displayed by him [by A. Rayevsky.—G. P.] might have been caused not so much by altruism as by a certain propensity of character" (ibid.). What sort of "*propensity*", exactly? Obviously a *propensity towards unselfishness, towards altruism*. If that is so, however, I really do not know what the difference is. I can only say this. In a society divided into classes the best and the most reliable criterion for assessing the moral "*propensity*" of any person from the "*upper*" class may, and should, be his attitude to people of the "*lower*" class, *particularly to people that are directly dependent on him* or, as is the case here, are his "baptized property". When such "*property*" calls its *owner* "an angel" (unless it is done out of hypocrisy, of course, which cannot be assumed in this case), the gates to "the highest spheres of the human spirit" are thrown open to that person. This is obvious, and precisely because it is obvious, it is clear that Mr. M. Herschensohn refutes his own argument, which by the way also happens in his book on Chaadayev. In Mr. M. Herschensohn's book the *facts* as often as not put up a hard fight against the *conclusions* which he draws from them. It is precisely his viewpoint that is to blame for it, his peculiar predilection for the "irrational" clothed in a rather dense fog of something that looks very much like mysticism. And it is a pity that he adheres to this strange viewpoint, as he is a talented narrator.

I dwell on this at length because, in general, some people in this country are now starting to play around with the "irrational"

rather loosely. As a person engaged in research in the history of Russian social thought, Mr. M. Herschensohn would do well to realise that the "irrational" motto covers the smuggling into our literature of a lot of theoretical rubbish that is not at all intended to facilitate the readers' entrance into "the highest spheres of the human spirit" but (on the contrary!) to help them turn their backs on these "spheres". The "irrational" is the roundabout way which a certain part of our intelligentsia follows to carry out its historical mission, that of elaborating the ideology of the modern Russian bourgeois, who feels instinctively the irreconcilability of his class interests with the most progressive and, undoubtedly, the noblest aspirations of these times.\* A good *narrator*, Mr. M. Herschensohn proves to be fairly weak each time he has to operate with *concepts*, when he happens to express a certain *general idea*. Here is an interesting example:

"The movement which involved the finest section of the young people of Moscow beginning with the mid-1830s," says he, "was not one of those partial revelations of the ideal, as all our subsequent social movements, mainly political ones, were; that is its main distinguishing feature—that it had as its object the ideal as a whole, or, to be more precise, its very substance and not some application of it. These young people did not dream of some particular improvements of a moral or political character, but of the revival in man of his divine nature in general. In the words of their German teachers they said that the universe is ruled by reason, which reaches self-consciousness in man only, and that, consequently, man's highest duty is to live consciously according to the same laws as the universe. As a contemporary (Annenkov) aptly put it, a "*new world*" is opened up for man in these aspirations (p. 207). Excellent! But what does "man's divine nature" mean? Man is man, and one hinders rather than promotes the understanding of his nature if one declares it to be divine. Furthermore, if the universe is ruled by *reason* and if that reason attains *self-consciousness* in man, then man's "*reason*" (*though not his "intellect"*) is quite capable of *comprehending* the universe, and the "*irrational*" has no place either in nature or in social life.

And, thanks to Mr. Herschensohn, we know already that a man incapable of feeling "the power and the beauty of the irrational in the world" cannot penetrate into the highest spheres of the human spirit. It follows that these highest spheres would have been inaccessible to the thinking young people of Moscow in the thirties as well. But, on the other hand, according to the self-same Mr. M. Her-

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\* Footnote from the collection of articles *From Defence to Attack*.—It was written in the spring of 1908. The following year Mr. M. Herschensohn, in his article "Creative Self-Consciousness" published in the notorious *Vekh*,<sup>223</sup> showed that he was himself ready to participate actively in elaborating the ideology indicated in the text. My remark proved to be well founded.

schensohn these young people undoubtedly went further into these spheres than anybody else. How is one to understand this? How make these ends meet? I do not know, and I do not think that Mr. Herschensohn knows either, so far.

Another example. In speaking of Herzen's and Ogarev's enthusiasm for the natural sciences in 1843-46, Mr. Herschensohn remarks: "In the final analysis, they were interested most of all in social life, consequently, in history, so that both of them simultaneously came to the conclusion that history must be based on anthropology, anthropology<sup>1</sup> in its turn on physiology, and the latter on chemistry; early in 1845, Ogarev informed Herzen of the anthropology course begun by Auguste Comte in Paris, and of Botkin's and Frolov's studies in the natural sciences, pointing out triumphantly that an interest in anthropology, in the science of the concrete man, was appearing everywhere. This was indeed a liberation from all prejudiced points of view, both from spiritualism and materialism. They found a way out of the logic versus nature dualism: matter is an abstraction downwards, just as logic is an abstraction upwards; properly speaking, neither the one nor the other exists in concrete reality, there is only a process" (p. 226). This again is very vague and, more than that, downright imprecise.

In actual fact the development of Herzen and Ogarev was one from Hegel to Feuerbach, i.e., from *idealism* to *materialism*, as opposed to Mr. Bulgakov who developed, as is well known, from historical materialism to Optina hermitage.<sup>223</sup> It is quite true that *they were not always aware of* this direction in their development. It is also quite true that, in developing from Hegel to Feuerbach, they sometimes became entangled in their own philosophical ideas, they could not introduce the necessary order in them and might therefore have seemed, to themselves and to others, equally remote both from *idealism* (this term is more appropriate here than the one used by Mr. Herschensohn—*spiritualism*) and from *materialism*. This is not a way out at all, however, but *only the inability to find one*. Indeed, what does the thesis mean that there is neither logic nor matter in concrete reality but only their interaction or process? It is as clear as daylight that interaction between *A* and *B* presupposes the existence of *both A and B*. Having recognised their *interaction*, we recognise, by the same token, *their existence*. We therefore have no right at all to insist that, "properly speaking, they do not exist". Quite the contrary: it follows from our own words that *they do exist, properly speaking*. Besides, by recognising the *interaction between "logic" and "matter"*, we cut off any retreat from the *dualism* which says that man consists of *body and mind*, these two component parts being in interaction. *Monism* does not lie in the direction in which Mr. Herschensohn seems to be looking for it. *Idealist monism* regards *matter* ("substance") as "the spirit's *other-being*"; *materialist monism* considers thought to be a *property of*

*matter* (when Voltaire said: "I am a body, and I think", this deist was expressing a purely materialist idea). One may be inclined towards *idealism*; or one may be inclined towards *materialism*. But one has to choose between them, for *a third choice does not exist!*

What do these words mean, now so often repeated by philosophic dilettantes: *matter is an abstraction*? Every concept is an abstraction, and if I have a *conception of matter*, then matter, as my concept, is also undoubtedly an abstraction. But that is not the point at all. The point is *whether there is something beyond my "ego" that corresponds to that "abstraction"*. The main distinguishing feature of any given philosophy is the answer which the latter gives to that question. Mr. Herschensohn, however, forgets all this and just repeats: matter is an abstraction, logic is an abstraction. Words! Words! Words!

"Every Russian should know the history of Russian social thought." In expressing this idea, Mr. Herschensohn has expressed a most indubitable truth. He does not even suspect, however, how difficult it is, these days, for a Russian to perform this duty. The thirties and the forties are the focus where all the trends of Russian social thought converge and diverge. An understanding of this epoch is an absolute necessity. To understand it, it is just as absolutely necessary to understand the philosophical systems which made the strongest impact on thinking Russian people of the time, i.e., *the systems of Hegel and Feuerbach*. Well, *neither the one nor the other* are known here with any degree of thoroughness. What follows from this? It is clear what. The history of Russian social thought is not understood as far as its most important and most profound trends are concerned. And this will probably continue for a long time, for our crew of writers do not show any inclination to make a thorough study of Hegel and Feuerbach. Our historians of Russian social thought are content to repeat bits of commonplace opinion and trite platitudes about these thinkers. That is why, despite the apparent talent of some of them, they have so far failed to strike "a vein", as the deacon in G. I. Uspensky puts it.

Mr. M. Herschensohn is, as I have said, one of a number of talented researchers in the field of the history of our social thought. Some of the essays contained in his *Young Russia* are of gripping interest, particularly the essay "*V. S. Pecherin*", which it is hard to put down. Of course, the interest evoked by this essay in the reader is explained largely by the highly dramatic nature of the subject, but Mr. M. Herschensohn's lively and fascinating style of presentation contributes a good deal, too. But it is obvious, nevertheless, that our author will never strike "a vein" in the history of our social life. He is far too helpless in matters of philosophy! It sounds ridiculous, but it must be said: Mr. Herschensohn, with a most serious air, includes Mr. P. Struve among Russian "*thinkers*". This shows his poor judgment of thinkers in gener-



al. And it is only because he is such a poor judge of them that he could write the lines I quoted above, that the enthusiasm for philosophy of the young people in Moscow in the 1830s, had for its object not some belittling of the ideal but "its very substance". Already Herzen understood very well (and explained quite satisfactorily in his brochure on the development of revolutionary ideas in Russia) that the contemporary philosophical ventures of thinking young people were born of the search for means that would help them to cope with the ugly reality surrounding them. From this, the only correct, point of view all our subsequent intellectual movements and ventures become understandable. This viewpoint, however, must seem insufficiently lofty to Mr. Herschensohn. He prefers talking about the "substance of the ideal", about "man's divine nature" and similar nebulosities ("the substance of the ideal" is "irrational", if not in the sense so dear to Mr. Herschensohn's heart). In these nebulosities it is very easy to lose sight of "*the very substance of the matter*", and I am prepared to wager that if Mr. Herschensohn ever tackles Belinsky and attempts to grasp "the substance" of his argument with the Slavophiles, he will never reach that "substance".

And still I say: read Mr. M. Herschensohn's *History of Young Russia*, read it! It provides a great deal of valuable *factual material* for understanding our intellectual development. As for the latter, Mr. M. Herschensohn is a hundred times right: "every Russian should know the history of Russian social thought", although it is difficult (ah, how difficult!) for a modern Russian "intellectual", confused by a mass of fashionable "irrationalities", to perform this duty. Indeed, it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle. Still, one must do one's best!

## ON M. HERSCHENSOHN'S BOOK *HISTORICAL NOTES*

*Historical Notes (on Russian Society), Moscow, 1910<sup>224</sup>*

This book consists of articles which have previously been published in the journals *Vestnik Yevropy* (1908) and *Russkaya Mysl* (1909),<sup>225</sup> as well as in the sensation-making collection *Vekhi*. Some of these articles appear here in a revised and enlarged form. Together they constitute a work which merits very serious attention.

Mr. M. Herschensohn is one of those writers who now pursue very assiduously the goal of adapting the views that are characteristic of a certain section of our "more or less progressive" intelligentsia to the present position of our more or less conscious bourgeoisie. This position cannot, of course, be called dominant as yet; we are still ruled by bureaucracy which guards its unlimited prerogatives jealously. But the bourgeoisie has moved a long way, or rather *has been moved by circumstances* towards supremacy, and anyone can sense that, unless our fatherland is destined to become a country of complete stagnation, the bourgeoisie will move still further ahead and, striking a bargain with the nobility, which is becoming more and more permeated with the bourgeois spirit, will put an end to the supremacy of the bureaucracy. It is well known, however, that in any country that is in the slightest degree civilised, the ruling class must have its ideologists. The group of writers to which Mr. M. Herschensohn belongs realises that only too well and is feverishly preparing to assume the role of the ideologists of the Russian bourgeoisie. True, it has been studying that role for quite a long time. The preparations began at the time when some (that is, properly speaking, very many) of our Marxists began "criticising Marx". At that time already those "who had eyes to see" perceived clearly the bourgeois nature of the intellectual change in a certain section of our intelligentsia which had previously been so enthusiastic about Marx's teaching (true, not for long).<sup>226</sup> But times were different then! At that time "dreams" were possible which now appear entirely "nonsensical"<sup>227</sup> to the vast majority of the can-

didates for the office of bourgeois ideologists. Therefore, although at that time these candidates already had a strong tendency "to go back" ("back to Lassalle", "back to Kant", etc.), hardly any of them foresaw that subsequent events would carry them so terribly far "back". Formerly some of them might call us to go "*back to Lassalle*", whereas now they are bound to invite educated Russian people to go *back to the Slavophiles*. Well, there is indeed a vast distance between Lassalle and the Slavophiles, let us say A. S. Khomyakov, I. V. Kireyevsky and Y. F. Samarin. It stands to reason that this vast distance could not be covered unless one went at a feverish pace.

It is precisely back to the Slavophiles that Mr. M. Herschensohn is calling us. However, one would of course be very mistaken if one thought that in so doing Mr. M. Herschensohn is seeking to revive the Slavophile teaching. No; taken as a whole, that teaching is too obsolete for our day, and Mr. M. Herschensohn is too modern to don the Slavophile cap. He does not borrow from the Slavophiles their practical programme or their philosophy of Russian history or their devotion to Orthodoxy; he borrows what he calls *the kernel* of their teaching (p. 139). He says:

"In the eyes of our liberal intelligentsia, from Belinsky to our day, Slavophilism is characterised by two features: a fanatic devotion to Orthodoxy and narrow political conservatism. Both of these features, however, were accidental in Slavophilism, for Orthodoxy did not follow from its metaphysics with a logical necessity, while its political conservatism was, to a considerable extent, caused by militant fervour, by that mood in which, as Hegel puts it, even  $2 \times 2 = 4$  seems to be both erroneous and immoral in the opponent's mouth. *Conservatism was inherent in the Slavophile idea as such only to the extent that it represented the desire to defend the moral legitimacy of tradition against the encroachments of the abstract mind*" (p. 139, italics by Mr. M. Herschensohn).

So here we are: Mr. M. Herschensohn does not approve of "narrow political conservatism", but at the same time he recognises the "moral legitimacy of tradition" that is encroached upon by the abstract mind. That is very well, that is precisely what our bourgeoisie needs now — not too far to the right (where there is bureaucracy and the Black Hundreds<sup>228</sup>) and not too far to the left (where there are "lawless men" who reject outright the "moral legitimacy of tradition"). It is a well-known fact that our bourgeoisie does not consist only of persons of the Orthodox persuasion. The Slavophiles' exclusive devotion to Orthodoxy is therefore obsolete now, and Mr. Herschensohn rejects it without the slightest hesitation. It is just as well known that our bourgeoisie will not be able to become a real ruling class until it acquires new political rights. That is why Mr. Herschen-

sohn rejects, just as decisively, the Slavophiles' political conservatism too. In general, he dislikes extremes. What he advocates in his *Historical Notes* is the old yet eternally new juste milieu, the "golden mean", the same old half-and-half. The future historian of our social thought will certainly pay attention to the fact that nowadays the "golden mean" particularly attracts those in this country who hold forth, on suitable as well as unsuitable occasions, on their hatred for "philistinism". But this is in passing. What I want to point out here is that, given the "tradition" characteristic of our intelligentsia, advocating the golden mean is a rather difficult and troublesome occupation. It is not for nothing that Mr. Herschensohn would have the reader believe that "the history of our publicistic writing after Belinsky is a continuous nightmare, as far as comprehension of life goes" (p. 168). One has to employ heavy metaphysical artillery in defence of the "golden mean". Our critics of Marx vaguely sensed this, when they urged us to go "back to Kant" and generally retreated "from Marxism to idealism". But Kant and the Western idealists proved to be insufficiently reliable, in the long run, and now Mr. S. Bulgakov "has consciously returned to the belief of his childhood, the belief in the crucified God and his gospel, as the complete, the highest and the most profound truth about man and his life" (see his article "The Intelligentsia and Religion", *Russkaya Mysl*, 1908, March), while Mr. Herschensohn has recalled the Slavophiles and even Gogol's *Selected Passages from Correspondence with Friends*.

In Mr. Herschensohn's view, the whole essence of the famous controversy between the Slavophiles and Westerners consisted in the fact that, while the Slavophiles' programme was "internal perfection of the individual", the Westerners' programme amounted "to the perfection of social forms" (p. 137, italics by Mr. Herschensohn).

There is not enough space here to dwell on the description of these two programmes given by our author. We have to limit ourselves to just a few remarks. Mr. Herschensohn is convinced that a normally thinking person cannot do without religion. The Slavophiles are precious to him precisely because they expressed the same conviction a long time ago. The "internal perfection of the individual" must proceed under the aegis of religion and only in this way: "The goal of each man as an individual consists in putting his own spirit in good order, that is, in being fully conscious of his moral duty as his cosmic or religious predestination and in concentrating all his spiritual powers on carrying out this duty; while man's social vocation consists in helping other people as well to put their spirit in order and in promoting, together with other people, an arrangement of common everyday life that would help all the members of society

to attain this principal individual goal in the easiest possible way" (pp. 135-36). It follows, as Mr. Herschensohn says, that a religiously thinking person does not at all deny the importance of social activity and social transformations: "but he rigorously subordinates society to the individual, and makes the improvements in the social or political structure dependent on the goals of individual spiritual perfection" (p. 136). Things are different with "a convinced Westerner or rationalist".

"He does not see any purposiveness in the world: the only law dominating the world is the law of mechanical causality, to which he also subjects mankind's historical life. He believes in an infinite growth of logical consciousness in man, strictly governed by the law of causality. He thus places in the foreground consciousness in the individual, and in history, the social structure as the totality of data that causally determines the success of individual consciousness. All the particulars of this programme follow therefrom. The moral world of the individual is left completely aside as an unconditionally dependent sphere; there is no sense in influencing this world directly in oneself or in others, neither is it possible, as it is constructed according to the iron law of causality; man's entire spiritual life is the mechanical product of external conditions. There is therefore only one way of raising life to a higher level — by changing the social conditions under which the individual lives, i.e., by a transformation of the society that is dictated by logical reason. This means that social activity is recognised as man's only lawful duty, the putting of one's own spirit in order being entirely neglected, and that, again, the consciously established forms of the community, and not its moral sphere, are declared to be the object of this activity" (pp. 136-37).

This opposition of the religious world outlook to the "rationalist" one constitutes the main idea of Mr. M. Herschensohn's book. Anyone in the least degree competent in these problems will see immediately that this opposition has no serious basis whatsoever. Indeed, it is quite sufficient to read, for instance, Chernyshevsky's novel *What Is To Be Done?*, which contains the entire code of the most progressive and the most consistent "Westernist" morality of the sixties, to see that Mr. M. Herschensohn slanders the "Westerners" most foully and wrongly in accusing them of completely neglecting the putting of their own spirit in order. The characters in this novel (the positive types, of course), far from neglecting the problems of putting their own spirit in order, i.e., problems of personal morality, devoted the greatest attention to these problems. People like Lopukhov, Kirsanov, and Vera Pavlovna were much more interested in problems of this kind than the contemporary progressives of Western Europe — to say nothing of people like Rakhmetov!

Further. Mr. M. Herschensohn seems to have had some philosophical training. It is therefore strange in the extreme to encounter in his writing the idea that, if man's moral world "is constructed according to the iron law of causality", it is both senseless and impossible to "influence" it in some direction or other. It is clear that the "influence" itself may be subject to this iron law. Come to think of it, is an influence possible or thinkable that would not be subject to it? This question is decisively answered *in the negative* by the whole of classical German philosophy (note, reader: *idealist, not at all materialist*, philosophy). Mr. Herschensohn, however, seems to be inclined to answer it in the positive sense. Whence this difference? That is also a very important question. We cannot take it up in these cursory notes. We shall merely point out to one indisputable historical fact: French idealist philosophy of the Restoration (i.e., of that period when the views of the French intelligentsia were being feverishly adapted to the changes in the position of the French bourgeoisie due to the Revolution) solved the problem of the relationship between freedom and necessity in approximately the same positive sense as Mr. Herschensohn does. This analogy is most remarkable from the sociologist's point of view.

Lastly, only someone with no idea of the history of development of the latest social concepts could imagine that the "Westerners" (or rationalists) placed social structure in the foreground "in history" for the sole reason that they were guilty of completely neglecting the problems of putting their own spirit and that of others in order. Firstly, this is contradicted by Mr. Herschensohn himself, who insists that the Westerners regarded social structure as "the totality of data that causally determines the success of individual consciousness"; if we are not mistaken, "individual consciousness" also belongs to the sphere of the "spirit". Secondly, the Westerners regarded, and still do regard, "the social structure" as "the totality of data that causally determines the success" ... not only of "individual consciousness" but of morality as well. Marx, the greatest genius of all the 19th-century "Westerners" and rationalists, wrote already in his polemics with Bruno Bauer: "If man is unfree in the materialistic sense, i.e., is free not through the negative power to avoid this or that, but through the positive power to assert his true individuality, crime must not be punished in the individual, but the anti-social sources of crime must be destroyed, and each man must be given social scope for the vital manifestation of his being. If man is shaped by environment, his environment must be made human."<sup>229</sup> Russian Westerners and rationalists, such as Chernyshevsky, Dobrolyubov and their ideological allies, expressed themselves in much the same spirit. Mr. Herschen-

sohn, however, pretends that he knows nothing of this. *He has to sing now the old song of the "crude" materialism of our "Westerners and rationalists"*.

After all that has been said there is little point in noting the fact that when Mr. Herschensohn defines, from his viewpoint, "the goal of each man as an individual", as well as man's social vocation, his ideas become vacuous as a result of their extreme vagueness: not only someone who belongs to the Slavophil camp may "be fully conscious of his moral duty" and "concentrate all his spiritual powers on carrying out this duty"; equally, as we have just seen, nothing prevents the "Westerners" from transforming the social structure precisely with the aim of "putting the spirit in order". The whole difference between the "Slavophiles" and the "Westerners" is thus reduced to this point: the former view their activity from the standpoint of religion and the latter, from the standpoint of reason. And it is not clear at all why we should prefer the first standpoint to the second one.

Just a moment, though. It is a little clearer at another point. On p. 144 of his book, having expressed his completely unproven thesis that there is no stronger revolutionary force in the world than the religious idea, Mr. M. Herschensohn adds significantly: "and although religious thought, as I indicated above, is inclined to treat tradition with consideration, valuing in it the natural result of mass spiritual experience, and, moreover, does not essentially ascribe much significance to external transformations, it nevertheless inevitably becomes opposed to the existing political structure, as this structure directly restricts the spiritual freedom of the individual."

So there it is, des Pudels Kern: Mr. Herschensohn's "religious" idea is opposed to the existing political structure, but at the same time it treats tradition with consideration and (which is, of course, the main point!) "does not essentially ascribe much significance to external transformations". Such an "idea" will not play around with socialism. In short, this is precisely the idea which the present-day bourgeoisie needs. This is the idea of the *juste milieu*, the golden mean, the half-and-half. And this idea, cooked with vegetable oil, is served up to us with great solemnity.

## ON V. Y. BOGUCHARSKY'S BOOK

### A. I. HERZEN<sup>230</sup>

Alexander Ivanovich Herzen. Published by the  
Alexander Ivanovich Herzen Circle, St. Petersburg, 1912

The recent centenary of A. I. Herzen occasioned fewer studies of him than one might have expected judging from the significance of this outstanding figure in the history of Russian social thought and Russian social development. Even those which have appeared can by no means always be recognised as satisfactory. Thus, Mr. Bogucharsky's work, the title of which is indicated above, is a complete failure. Anyone who sought to form a notion of Herzen by relying on Mr. Bogucharsky's conclusions and indications would be (one has to say it right out!) on the wrong track. He would form an image that has very little to do with the real Herzen.

For instance, Mr. Bogucharsky writes this:

"Certain writers regard Herzen's acceptance of Saint-Simonist doctrine as something that fully determined his world outlook: Russia has acquired her own prophet of socialist teaching, of the utopian phase of its development, of course, but a *socialist* nevertheless. That is quite wrong" (pp. 32-33).

*In actual fact this is, on the contrary, quite right.* Let us recall what Herzen himself says on this point.

In *My Past and Thoughts* he reminisces: "Saint-Simonism formed the basis of our convictions and remained unchanged in essentials."\*

This looks very much like what "certain writers" say of him and what Mr. Bogucharsky declares to be quite wrong.

On another occasion the same Herzen writes: "I did not become a socialist yesterday. Thirty years ago I was imperially decreed a socialist by Nikolai Pavlovich — cela commence à compter.\*\* Twenty years later I recalled it in a letter to his son of which you know, and another ten years later I am telling you that I do not see any way at all out of the universal impasse of the

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\* A. I. Herzen, *Works*, Geneva edition, Vol. VI, p. 197.

\*\*[and that means something]



educated world other than senile withering away or social upheaval, either abrupt or gradual, either coming from the people's life or introduced into it by theoretical thought—it does not matter which.”\*

This again bears a remarkable resemblance to what “certain writers” say of Herzen, and what Mr. Bogucharsky dislikes. How is that? Can it be that A. I. Herzen himself is included among “certain writers” who spread “quite wrong” information about Herzen? There is nothing impossible about that. It does happen that men in general and writers in particular get a quite erroneous idea of their own mental development or intentionally utter falsehoods about it. Mr. Bogucharsky, however, is not likely of course to suspect Herzen of lying. One has to assume therefore that he is ascribing to Herzen a completely erroneous view of his own spiritual history. On what grounds, then? Just listen to this:

“The Herzen of the thirties, not just of the beginning but of the whole decade, is a man passionately *searching* for things, and not one who has made a final choice. That does not belittle him at all but, on the contrary, elevates him even more and lends even greater depth to his already profound soul” (p. 33). That is the only foundation for Mr. Bogucharsky's thesis. Then follow a few lines which paraphrase the same argument, and then all of a sudden Mr. Bogucharsky invites the reader “to go back to the events of Herzen's external life” (the same page). Thus his whole argument boils down to the fact that Herzen would have risen very high in Mr. Bogucharsky's eyes if he had not been a socialist in the thirties, albeit a socialist of “the utopian phase of development”, but simply a “man passionately searching for things”. This, as one can see, is not quite convincing.

Just a moment, though. On page 37 of his book our author advances another argument. Here it is. It concerns Herzen's meeting, before his arrest, with N. A. Zakharyina, who later became his wife. The ardent young man spoke indignantly of Ogarev's arrest to the young girl, and the latter tried to turn his thoughts to God. Having recounted this conversation, Mr. Bogucharsky says: “That is the whole of the talk which, if Herzen had been *at that time* the kind of man he is sometimes described [Mr. Bogucharsky should have said, *the kind of man he describes himself to be.*—*G. P.*], would hardly have made a strong impression on the ‘Saint-Simonists’ soul. However, that was precisely the case. What are the reasons for it? They lie precisely in the fact that at the time Herzen was a man of views that had not taken final shape, not by far. There was much in him that was

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\* “Letters to an Opponent” (i. e., to Y. F. Samarin.—*G. P.*). The first letter (November 15, 1864). See *Kolokol*, A. I. Herzen's selected articles, edited by Mr. Tikhomirov, p. 513.

seething and boiling, but very little that had become settled and stable."

Strange! The conversation with N. A. Zakharyina made a strong impression on Herzen's soul *only* because there was little in him that had become settled and stable. Had he been a Saint-Simonist, the impact would have been much weaker. Why? Could not a conversation about God make an impression on a Saint-Simonist? Is Mr. Bogucharsky aware that all Saint-Simonists in general were religious, and many of them even reached the state of strong religious exaltation? Besides, the conversation with N. A. Zakharyina was bound to affect Herzen strongly mainly because she reminded him of the need for selflessness and added that one had to be able to resist the momentary passions of the wayward crowd. This was not a conversation to be forgotten by a young man who was awaiting arrest and, in addition to arrest, a whole series of attacks by the "loyalist" elders of various ages and both sexes that were close to his family: "you have pained your parents, spoilt your career", etc., etc. We have absolutely no grounds for thinking that a young Saint-Simonist in a situation like this would prove to be less impressionable than a young man in whom "there was little that had become settled and stable". Who is not aware of how impressionable the French Saint-Simonists were, for instance? It is remarkable that it was precisely those of them whose views were the most "settled and stable" that were marked by the greatest impressionability.

In short, Mr. Bogucharsky's attempt to refute the correctness of what Herzen tells us about the course of his spiritual development must be regarded as completely unfounded.

Further. Herzen says, as is well known, that at all times in his life and under all manner of circumstances the reading of the Gospel brought peace and meekness to his soul. Our author says in this connection that "the essence of Christianity" (note this, reader) had a great impact on Pushkin, Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky. He even quotes some lines from Pushkin's poem which narrates when and why "the poet heeds in holy awe of the seraph's harp". This quote is followed by the following remark by Mr. Bogucharsky: "Something similar was also happening in the soul of the great Russian publicist: later, after parting completely with all the 'dogmata' and, moreover, with the essentials of his former faith, Herzen nevertheless carried with him something of it 'to the other shore' as well; he carried it not in his reason but in that very thing which, in his own words, 'accompanied him throughout his life'" (pp. 39-40).

This is touching. But not quite clear. Herzen parted "later" with the *essentials* of his former faith. That is what Mr. Bogucharsky announces, and it is quite correct. But what faith was

that? The *Christian* faith, obviously. What is the difference then between the "*essentials*" of Christianity and its "*essence*"? Quite obviously, there is *no difference* at all: they are one and the same thing. And if they are one and the same thing, it follows that even after Herzen parted with the "*essence* of Christianity", it continued to exert an influence on him, *just as* it had formerly influenced Pushkin and later Dostoyevsky and Tolstoy, that is, writers who *never even parted with it*.

That is odd.

It is also odd that in his emotion Mr. Bogucharsky did not notice the oddity. It is all the more odd that Herzen "*later*", during his exile in Novgorod, read Feuerbach's famous book *The Essence of Christianity*, with great delight and at that very time joined those men who *associated quite definite concepts with the words the "essence of Christianity"*. The *essence of Christianity*, said Feuerbach, is *the essence of the heart*. The Christian ascribes to his God those properties that belong to his own heart. He *alienates* them, transferring them to an imaginary being. For this transference to be possible, however, man's reason must be asleep. "Sleep is the key to the mysteries of religion," added Feuerbach. Having assimilated this attitude to the "*essence of Christianity*", Herzen certainly could not have been under the influence of this essence "*later*", that is, when his reason awoke. Quite the reverse, *his attitude towards it was negative*. He wrote to Samarin: "We stand most really on our most real soil: soil is generally under one's feet; you have another soil above your heads; you are richer than we are, but it may well be that earthly objects therefore appear to you reversed."\* Presenting earthly objects in reverse is the essence of any religion, Christianity included. By refusing to recognise the existence of "*another*" soil above man's head, Herzen became *inaccessible to the influence of the "essence of Christianity"*. In this *he was unlike* Pushkin, Dostoyevsky, Tolstoy and other writers who believed, *in this he differed from them*. It is all the more necessary to note this since there is a stream of mysticism flowing through our literature at present that is introducing enormous and extremely harmful confusion into readers' minds; for a proof take the numerous "religious quests" of our day. This is always the case in a period of reaction: with the real soil going from under their feet, kind but weak men try to console themselves with a belief in the existence of "another" soil above their heads. Mr. Bogucharsky should have stressed that the conciliatory impression produced on Herzen by the reading of the Gospel had absolutely nothing to do with the "holy awe" which the mystic sounds of the mystic "seraph's harp" aroused in Pushkin's soul. He did not, as we

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\* The *Kolokol* collection, p. 518.

observe with extreme regret, carry out this duty of a truthful and sober narrator: quite the reverse.

Lack of space does not permit me to point out all of Mr. Bogucharsky's extremely numerous and exceedingly sad blunders. I am obliged to restrict myself to a few examples. I shall now add another and by no means insignificant example to those just cited.

Mr. Bogucharsky writes that, when he was living in Nice, Herzen worked hard on the problem of where the objective guarantees of the future realisation of socialist ideals lie. The conclusion to which he came as far as Western Europe was concerned, was this: the socialist structure might or might not become established in it, but in neither case would it cease to be petty-bourgeois. That was, as Mr. Bogucharsky insists, Herzen's pivotal idea. He considered the European worker a future petty-bourgeois. "What does that mean?" asks Mr. Bogucharsky with a knowing air. "It means that Herzen saw two problems in the idea of 'socialism': the economic problem which amounted to the socialisation of the means of production, and another one, spiritual in the highest sense of the word—the problem of the free individual" (pp. 118-19).

As is his custom, Mr. Bogucharsky does nothing to substantiate this "means" of his. And that means that this "means" is also completely unsubstantiated. Let us try to sort it out a bit. And let us listen to Herzen himself again.

"I do not regard the question of the future of Europe as finally solved," says he, "but ... I must say that *I see neither a speedy nor a satisfactory solution....* I do not envisage a speedy downfall of the petty bourgeoisie and a renovation of the old state structure without the most awful and bloody fight."\*

"What does this mean?" I shall ask in my turn. Apparently the following: *Herzen did not consider the triumph of the petty bourgeoisie to be guaranteed in any case.* Not at all! He admitted that *it might fall.* But he believed the proletariat's bloody fight with the bourgeoisie to be *the necessary condition of that downfall,* and such a condition seemed to him too hard and, moreover, too remote as well. That was the reason, *and the only reason,* why he said that he saw neither a speedy nor a satisfactory solution to the present situation *where, the petty bourgeoisie held sway.* This is quite different from what the wise and emotional Mr. Bogucharsky discovered in him.

And here are some more lines which Mr. Bogucharsky has missed: "Our problems are of a kind that may be solved through the state's social measures without *violent upheavals.*"\*\*

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\* *Works*, Vol. X, p. 285. Italics by Herzen.

\*\* *Ibid.*, p. 292.

And what does this "mean"? Herzen's faith in Russia was to a considerable degree founded on his firm belief that our Russian problems *could be solved without "upheavals"*; "upheavals" frightened him too much, for he had been educated in the school of utopian socialism. *That is what it means*. And that is new proof that Herzen's notorious disappointment in Western Europe was completely misunderstood by our contemporary liberal wise men like Mr. Bogucharsky.

If, in Herzen's view, the proletariat's bloody victory over the bourgeoisie would entail *the downfall of the petty bourgeoisie*, it is clear then that the *dualism* ascribed to him by Mr. Bogucharsky (the economic question, *on the one hand*, and the question of man's freedom, *on the other*) did not exist in reality, and if it did exist, its logical premises were quite different from those that are given in the book under consideration. Herzen sensed the unsatisfactory nature of the utopian basis of contemporary socialist hopes, he was looking for a scientific basis for socialism. His own mode of thinking was in this respect *transitional*. One can observe that Herzen vacillated here. *To the extent that he remained a utopian socialist*, he was really capable, *like Mr. Bogucharsky*, of separating the economic question from the question of man's freedom. On the other hand, *to the extent that he approached the point of view of scientific socialism* (and he approached it precisely when he looked for the objective guarantee of the future realisation of socialism), this separation of two inseparable questions became logically and psychologically impossible for him. He then became a *monist*, in socialism as well as in other things. This was made considerably easier for him by the fact that he first went through the excellent school of the monist Hegel, and later through the school, also a very good one, of the monist Feuerbach. But Mr. Bogucharsky does not recognise any of this, as he does not know and does not want to know it.

To conclude, a great howler. Mr. Bogucharsky cannot find words that would be strong enough to extol A. I. Herzen, and, of course, he is right in the sense that Herzen deserves great praise; but Herzen was the father of the Russian Narodnik movement. This is recognised by Mr. Bogucharsky, who at the same time takes an entirely negative attitude to the Narodnik movement. In his book *From the History of Political Struggle in the 1870s and 1880s* (Moscow, 1912) he slights it as purely "intellectual" and completely divorced from real life. "Harmless and dreamy, romantic and utopian in the extreme," says Mr. Bogucharsky in the above-named book, "it would have come to naught of itself in its revolutionary tendencies, had it not been for the habit of Russian ruling spheres to be frightened literally by the slightest murmur in the country" (p. 2). If we

are to believe Mr. Bogucharsky, it transpires that the highly extolled Herzen was the ideologist of an exceedingly pitiful movement. One would fain exclaim, "Poor Herzen!" Luckily Mr. Bogucharsky is quite wrong in his evaluation of the revolutionary Narodnik movement, which he holds in lower esteem than even contemporary Russian liberalism. So the word "poor" should be applied to Mr. Bogucharsky himself, and not to Herzen.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Plekhanov's work *N. G. Chernyshevsky* was printed in 1890-92 as a series of articles in four issues of the Russian Marxist journal *Sotsial-Demokrat* published by the Emancipation of Labour group in London in 1890 and in Geneva in 1892. The present edition includes the first article from this series, which deals mainly with Chernyshevsky's world outlook.

For the "International Library" issued by Dietz's Publishing House Plekhanov introduced some changes in the *Sotsial-Demokrat* articles, wrote a special introduction giving a general outline of Russia's political and economic position in the 1850s and 1860s, and made several additions which are reproduced in this volume. The book appeared in German in 1894 under the title *N. G. Tschernyschewski. Literarisch-geschichtliche Studie.*  
p. 45

- <sup>2</sup> The *Crimean War* of 1853-56 was waged by Russia on the one hand and Britain, France, Turkey and Sardinia on the other. It broke out as a result of the conflicting economic and political interests of these countries in the Middle East. Backward serf-owning Russia was unable to resist the more developed capitalist countries of Western Europe.  
p. 45
- <sup>3</sup> *Little Russia*—the official name of the Ukraine in tsarist Russia.  
p. 48
- <sup>4</sup> *Russkaya Starina* (Russian Antiquity)—an historical monthly published in St. Petersburg from 1870 to 1918. It devoted much space to the publication of reminiscences, diaries and letters by prominent statesmen, and various documents.  
p. 50
- <sup>5</sup> A reference to A. P. Zablotsky-Desyatovsky's memorandum "On Serfdom in Russia".  
p. 50
- <sup>6</sup> The *Slavophiles* and the *Westerners*—two trends in Russian social thought of the mid-nineteenth century.

The Slavophiles advanced the "theory" that Russia should follow a specific, unique path of historical development based on the communal system, which, they held, was characteristic only of the Slavs, and on Orthodoxy. They saw no possibility of revolutionary upheavals in Russia, and were therefore strongly opposed to the revolutionary movement not only in Russia but in the West too.

In contrast to the Slavophiles, the Westerners maintained that Russia should follow the same path of development as the West-European countries (hence their name) and go through the capitalist stage. They emphasised the progressive nature of the bourgeois system (as compared with

Russia's social system based on serfdom) and adopted a negative attitude towards serfdom; they saw constitutional monarchies, Britain in particular, as their ideal. p. 58

<sup>7</sup> From A. S. Pushkin's poem "To the Slanderers of Russia". p. 58

<sup>8</sup> *Decembrists*—revolutionaries from the Russian nobility who in December 1825 revolted against autocracy and serfdom. p. 59

<sup>9</sup> The text that follows in pointed brackets is a quotation from Plekhanov's second note to Engels' work *Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy* (see present edition, Vol. I, Moscow, 1974, pp. 432-33). p. 59

<sup>10</sup> An expression used by Belinsky in his letter to V. P. Botkin of March 1, 1841. p. 60

<sup>11</sup> K. Marx and F. Engels, *Collected Works*, Vol. 5, Moscow, 1976, p. 6. p. 62

<sup>12</sup> K. Marx and F. Engels, *Selected Works* (in three volumes), Vol. 3, Moscow, 1977, p. 356. p. 63

<sup>13</sup> The first Russian translation of Darwin's *Origin of Species* appeared in 1864. p. 63

<sup>14</sup> This refers to the first issue of the journal *Sotsial-Demokrat* containing the first article from Plekhanov's work *N. G. Chernyshevsky* (see Note 1). p. 66

<sup>15</sup> *Sovremennik* (The Contemporary)—a scientific-political and literary monthly published in St. Petersburg from 1836 to 1866. Among its contributors were N. G. Chernyshevsky, V. G. Belinsky, and M. Y. Saltykov-Shchedrin. The *Sovremennik* was the best journal of its day. It expressed the aspirations of the revolutionary democrats and exercised a great influence on the progressive elements of Russian society. p. 66

<sup>16</sup> A reference to Chernyshevsky's book *Lessing, His Age, His Life and His Work*, Geneva, 1876. p. 68

<sup>17</sup> Chernyshevsky was born on July 12 (24), 1828. p. 68

<sup>18</sup> Chernyshevsky's wife—Olga Sokratovna Vasilyeva—was not A. N. Pypin's sister. Pypin was related to Chernyshevsky himself, who was his cousin. p. 68

<sup>19</sup> *Otechestvenniye Zapiski* (Fatherland Notes)—a literary and political journal published from 1820 to 1884. Between 1839 and 1846 it was one of the best progressive journals of the times with V. G. Belinsky and A. I. Herzen among its editors. In 1863 it was taken over by N. A. Nekrasov and M. Y. Saltykov-Shchedrin and became a mouthpiece of the revolutionary-democratic trend. p. 68



- <sup>20</sup> The term "*thinking realists*" belongs to D. I. Pisarev. His followers called themselves by this name because they supported the study of the natural sciences and real life as opposed to that of speculative idealist philosophy. p. 71
- <sup>21</sup> *Russky Vestnik* (The Russian Herald)—a political and literary journal that appeared from 1856 to 1906. Between 1856 and 1887 it was published in Moscow under the editorship of M. N. Katkov and was the organ of the reactionary serf-owners. p. 72
- <sup>22</sup> K. Marx and F. Engels, *Selected Works* (in three volumes), Vol. 3, Moscow, 1977, p. 129. p. 74
- <sup>23</sup> See G.W.F. Hegel, *Philosophie des Rechts*. p. 76
- <sup>24</sup> A reference to Giovanni Battista Vico (1668-1744), the well-known Italian philosopher. p. 78
- <sup>25</sup> F. Engels, *Anti-Dühring*, Moscow, 1978, p. 34. p. 80
- <sup>26</sup> *Colons*—people in Ancient Rome who leased small plots of land from big landowners. In return for the use of these plots they paid both in money and in kind. They were the forerunners of the mediaeval serfs. p. 88
- <sup>27</sup> *Adscripts*—Roman and Byzantine peasants who were bound to the soil and in their position were closest to the slaves. p. 88
- <sup>28</sup> F. Engels, *Anti-Dühring*, Moscow, 1978, pp. 200-01. p. 90
- <sup>29</sup> K. Marx and F. Engels, *Collected Works*, Vol. 3, Moscow, 1975, p. 177. p. 91
- <sup>30</sup> K. Marx and F. Engels, *Selected Works* (in three volumes), Vol. 3, Moscow, 1977, p. 130. p. 93
- <sup>31</sup> Quoted from Goethe's poem *Vanitas! Vanitatum vanitas!* p. 94
- <sup>32</sup> *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher*—edited by Karl Marx and Arnold Ruge and published in German in Paris. Only the first issue, a double one, appeared in February 1844. It contained a number of works by Marx and Engels. p. 101
- <sup>33</sup> The expression *ad usum delphini* means "for the dauphin" (son of Louis XIV). On the King's orders the dauphin's tutors "prepared" classics for their pupil's reading by cutting out all passages which they considered "unseemly". p. 102
- <sup>34</sup> A reference to the brutal suppression of the Paris workers' uprising of June 23-26, 1848. p. 103
- <sup>35</sup> In his *Critique of the Gotha Programme* Marx wrote the following about Lassalle's activity in connection with the organisation of producers' co-operative societies: "Instead of arising from the revolutionary process of

- transformation of society, the 'socialist organisation of the total labour' 'arises' from the 'state aid' that the state gives to the producers' co-operative societies and which the state, not the worker, 'calls into being'. It is worthy of Lassalle's imagination!" (K. Marx and F. Engels, *Selected Works* [in three volumes], Vol. 3, Moscow, 1977, p. 24). p. 107
- <sup>36</sup> Plekhanov has in mind the liberal Narodniks, particularly V. P. Vorontsov who wrote many works extolling Russian handicraft industries and artels. p. 108
- <sup>37</sup> K. Marx and F. Engels, *Collected Works*, Vol. 6, Moscow, 1976, p. 494. p. 110
- <sup>38</sup> The full title of Lassalle's book is *Herr Bastiat-Schulze von Delitzsch, der ökonomische Julian, oder Capital und Arbeit*. p. 111
- <sup>39</sup> A reference to the liberal Narodniks, the most prominent of whom was N. K. Mikhailovsky who enjoyed great popularity among the pro-Narodnik Russian intelligentsia. The Narodniks, who adhered to Chernyshevsky's and Herzen's erroneous views of the Russian village commune as the embryo of socialism and renounced Chernyshevsky's revolutionary-democratic views, considered themselves to be the latter's "heirs". p. 112
- <sup>40</sup> V. G. Belinsky died in 1848. p. 114
- <sup>41</sup> Chernyshevsky wrote his novel *Prologue to a Prologue* in a Siberian prison in 1867-71, i.e., much later than the novel *What Is To Be Done?* which he completed in 1863. p. 117
- <sup>42</sup> Almost all the characters in Chernyshevsky's novel had their prototypes in real life. Under the name of Levitsky Chernyshevsky portrayed N. A. Dobrolyubov, under Sokolovsky—the Polish revolutionary Zygmunt Sierakowski, under Count Chaplin—the notorious serf-owner Muravyov who brutally suppressed the Polish insurrection of 1863, under Ryazan-tsev—K. D. Kavelin, a typical representative of materialism at that time, and under Savyolov—the statesman N. A. Milutin. p. 117
- <sup>43</sup> Chernyshevsky believed in the possibility of a peasant uprising in Russia and did much to prepare it; in particular he wrote a proclamation entitled "To the Manorial Peasants from Their Well-Wishers". p. 119
- <sup>44</sup> *Akaky Akakiyevich*—the main character in Gogol's story *The Greatcoat*. p. 120
- <sup>45</sup> The people's dissatisfaction with the 1861 Peasant Reform facilitated the growth of revolutionary sentiments among progressive intellectuals. Apart from Chernyshevsky's proclamation "To the Manorial Peasants" and appeals printed in Herzen's journal *Kolokol* (see Note 172), several periodicals and leaflets were published illegally by various revolutionary groups: the proclamation "To the Younger Generation", three issues of the revolutionary periodical *Velikoruss* and the leaflet "Young Russia". Among the secret revolutionary organisations of that time the most important was the *Zemlya i Volya* (Land and Liberty) society set up in 1862 with the active participation of Chernyshevsky and his followers. p. 121

- <sup>46</sup> A reference to the upsurge in the national liberation movement in Italy in the 1850s and the formation of a united Kingdom of Italy in 1861.  
The *North American War* is the American Civil War of 1861-65.  
p. 121
- <sup>47</sup> In this article Chernyshevsky denounces the so-called superfluous people of the type described in Turgenev's novel *Rudin*, Herzen's short novel *Who Is To Blame?* and Nekrasov's poem "Sasha".  
p. 122
- <sup>48</sup> *Russkaya Beseda* (Russian Talk)—a Slavophil journal published in Moscow from 1856 to 1860.  
p. 126
- <sup>49</sup> *Ekonomicheskyy Ukazatel* (Economic Index)—a Russian weekly published in St. Petersburg from 1857 to 1861 under the editorship of I. V. Vernadsky.  
p. 126
- <sup>50</sup> *Manchestermen* or *Free Traders*—representatives of a trend in bourgeois economic thought in the first half of the nineteenth century. They advocated Free Trade and non-interference by the state in economic affairs.  
p. 130
- <sup>51</sup> *Katheder socialists* (or socialists of the chair)—bourgeois professors who advocated the theory of the peaceful growth of capitalism into socialism, thus diverting the proletariat from revolutionary struggle.  
p. 131
- <sup>52</sup> *Svistok* (The Whistle)—a Russian journal published from 1859 to 1863. Its organiser and chief contributor was N. A. Dobrolyubov who wrote his articles under the penname of Konrad Lilienschwager.  
p. 132
- <sup>53</sup> *Dyen* (The Day)—a Slavophil weekly published by I. S. Aksakov in Moscow from 1862 to 1865.  
p. 132
- <sup>54</sup> Katkov was the publisher of the journal *Russkyy Vestnik* (see Note 21) and Albertini and Dudyskin were contributors to *Otechestvenniye Zapiski* (see Note 19).  
p. 132
- <sup>55</sup> The *Moscow Slavophil circle* was formed in the late 1830s. It included the most prominent representatives of Slavophilism: I. V. and P. V. Kireyevsky, Y. F. Samarin, I. S. and K. S. Aksakov, and others.  
p. 135
- <sup>56</sup> Quoted from the programme article published in the first issue of the weekly *Dyen*.  
The state emblem of tsarist Russia was decorated with a double-headed eagle.  
p. 136
- <sup>57</sup> The *Ruthenians*—the name given by bourgeois ethnographers and historians to the Ukrainian population of Galicia, the Carpathian area, and Bukovina. It was widely used in the nineteenth century.  
p. 137
- <sup>58</sup> *Osnova* (The Foundation)—a Ukrainian socio-political monthly published in St. Petersburg in 1861 and 1862. While supporting the journal in a number of its demands concerning the development of Ukrainian popular culture, the *Sovremennik* often criticised it for liberal tendencies.  
p. 137

- <sup>59</sup> The article from which Plekhanov quotes here is not included in Chernyshevsky's *Collected Works*. p. 140
- <sup>60</sup> In the autumn of 1861 large-scale student demonstrations took place in a number of university towns to protest against the reactionary University Rules introduced by the tsarist government. p. 143
- <sup>61</sup> Plekhanov devoted three articles to an analysis of Chernyshevsky's politico-economic views. They appeared in the second, third and fourth issues of the Geneva *Sotsial-Demokrat*. These articles are not included in the present volume. p. 145
- <sup>62</sup> Chernyshevsky adopted a critical attitude towards Mill. This was emphasised by Marx in the Afterword to the second German edition of *Capital*. Marx wrote: "Hence a shallow syncretism, of which John Stuart Mill is the best representative. It is a declaration of bankruptcy by bourgeois economy, an event on which the great Russian scholar and critic, N. Tschernyschewsky, has thrown the light of a master mind in his 'Outlines of Political Economy According to Mill'" (K. Marx, *Capital*, Vol. I, Moscow, 1977, p. 25). p. 145
- <sup>63</sup> It should be Vetoshnikov, not Vetoshkin. p. 146
- <sup>64</sup> The novel *What Is To Be Done?* was completed by Chernyshevsky in April 1863. p. 148
- <sup>65</sup> The words are from Nekrasov's poem "A Song to Yeryomushka". p. 149
- <sup>66</sup> Lopukhov, Kirsanov and Vera Pavlovna are the main characters in *What Is To Be Done?* p. 150
- <sup>67</sup> A quotation from the comedy *Wit Works Woe* by the Russian writer A. S. Griboyedov. p. 151
- <sup>68</sup> The *Petrashetski*—members of a circle of progressive Russian intellectuals formed by M. V. Butashevich-Petrashkevsky in St. Petersburg in 1845-49. They discussed various questions including projects for emancipating the peasants, overthrowing autocracy, setting up a republic, and also revolutionary methods of struggle. The views of the circle's revolutionary nucleus were formed under the influence of the ideas of the Decembrists (see Note 8), Belinsky and Herzen, as well as the progressive ideas of the utopian socialism preached by Fourier and other West-European thinkers. p. 152
- <sup>69</sup> *Bazarov*—the main character in I. S. Turgenev's *Fathers and Sons*. p. 153
- <sup>70</sup> A reference to the revolutionary Narodniks of the 1870s who "went to the people" (the Russian for people is *narod*), leaving their own social environment, families and comforts. p. 154
- <sup>71</sup> The most daring attempts to free Chernyshevsky are connected with the names of Ippolit Myshkin and Hermann Lopatin. They both failed. p. 155

- <sup>72</sup> A reference to Chernyshevsky's article "The Origin of the Theory of the Beneficial Character of the Struggle for Life" published in 1888 in which Chernyshevsky advocates transformism, i.e., the evolutionary idea of development, but criticises Darwin for applying the theory of the struggle for existence—borrowed from Malthus—to living nature.

Later, in 1909, Plekhanov renounced his negative assessment of this article by Chernyshevsky (see this volume, p. 260 et seq.). p. 156

- <sup>73</sup> Here and below pointed brackets indicate that the words or passages from Plekhanov's article enclosed in them were provided with addenda in the German edition. p. 157

- <sup>74</sup> Chernyshevsky's term "*new people*" denotes people of the same type as Lopukhov, Kirsanov, Rakhmetov and Vera Pavlovna—the main characters in his novel *What Is To Be Done?* p. 158

- <sup>75</sup> On learning of the Peasant Reform of 1861, Herzen (who was not yet aware of its illusory nature) held a party to celebrate the peasants' emancipation. He proposed a toast to Russia, her welfare and prosperity, which was warmly acclaimed by the guests. p. 160

- <sup>76</sup> A reference to Chernyshevsky's article "A Criticism of the Philosophical Prejudices Against Communal Land Tenure". p. 161

- <sup>77</sup> The proclamation "*To the Younger Generation*" exposed the illusory nature of the Peasant Reform of 1861 and called for a revolutionary uprising against autocracy. It was circulated in Russia in September 1861. Its authors, the writer N. V. Shelgunov and the revolutionary poet M. L. Mikhailov, were prominent in the revolutionary-democratic movement of the 1860s. The proclamation was printed in Herzen's Free Russian Press in London, though he did not approve of its contents. p. 163

- <sup>78</sup> The proclamation "*To All Officers*", March 1862, called on them to unite into parties "not according to social estates but according to convictions". 163

- <sup>79</sup> The leaflet "*Young Russia*", printed in the middle of May 1862, was widely circulated in St. Petersburg, Moscow and the provinces. Its author was the revolutionary democrat P. G. Zaichnevsky. p. 163

- <sup>80</sup> *Russkoye Slovo* (The Russian Word)—a monthly published in St. Petersburg from 1859 to 1866. N. V. Shelgunov and A. P. Schchapov were among its contributors. From 1861 D. I. Pisarev, a prominent publicist and critic, determined the character of the journal. p. 164

- <sup>81</sup> In 1908, in view of the forthcoming twentieth anniversary of Chernyshevsky's death, Plekhanov returned to his work *N. G. Chernyshevsky* published in the journal *Sotsial-Demokrat* (1890-92) and as a separate volume in German (1894). Compared with those two publications, the 1909 edition was considerably enlarged; Plekhanov included in it a revised preface, an introduction and a long section entitled "N. G. Chernyshevsky's Philosophical, Historical and Literary Views", which together formed Part One of his new book. Part Two consisted of two sections: "N. G. Chernyshevsky's Political Views" and "N. G. Chernyshevsky's Politico-Economic

Views". The first section was re-written while the second section reproduced, with minor changes, the four articles from the *Sotsial-Demokrat*.

The work was published by the Shipovnik Publishing House, St. Petersburg, in October 1909.

The present volume includes only the Introduction and Part One of the book in accordance with the subject matter of the present five-volume edition. The article Chernyshevsky's "Aesthetic Theory" from Part One is to be found in Volume V. p. 169

- <sup>82</sup> A reference to Chernyshevsky's article on Fonvizin's comedy *The Brigadier* written in May 1850. p. 179

- <sup>83</sup> A reference to the preface to the book *N. G. Chernyshevsky* which is not included in the present edition. p. 186

- <sup>84</sup> The word which the publisher could not make out is "demands". p. 190

- <sup>85</sup> *Obломov*—the main character in the novel of the same name by I. A. Goncharov. p. 198

- <sup>86</sup> This fable is about a cat that steals a piece of meat. The cook begins a long lecture on why it is wrong to steal, during which the cat continues to eat the stolen meat. The fable ends as follows: "But Vaska (the cat.—*Tr.*) went on listening and eating." p. 198

- <sup>87</sup> It has now been proved that the proclamation "To the Manorial Peasants from Their Well-Wishers" was written by N. G. Chernyshevsky.

The illegal leaflets *Velikoruss* were published in 1861 by a committee whose composition has not been yet established. It is thought to have included Chernyshevsky's followers Vladimir and Nikolai Obruchev, of whom the former contributed to the *Sovremennik*. As for Chernyshevsky's participation, there is no precise information on this. p. 201

- <sup>88</sup> In 1885 Chernyshevsky wrote the article "The Nature of Human Knowledge", published in *Russkiye Vedomosti* under the pseudonym of "Andreyev" and in 1888 he wrote the article "The Origin of the Theory of the Beneficial Character of the Struggle for Life", published in *Russkaya Mysl*. p. 207

- <sup>89</sup> Rousseau wrote his novel *Julie, ou La Nouvelle Héloïse*, which embodied the main principles of his world outlook, at the age of 49; Godwin's well-known novel *Caleb Williams* was written when he was 38. p. 207

- <sup>90</sup> See present edition, Vol. I, Moscow, 1974, pp. 480-697. p. 214

- <sup>91</sup> The article "Chernyshevsky's Aesthetic Theory" is to be included in Volume V of the present edition. p. 216

- <sup>92</sup> F. Lange's *Geschichte des Materialismus und Kritik seiner Bedeutung in der Gegenwart*, published in 1865, was an attempt to criticise the main representatives of materialism from the standpoint of neo-Kantianism. p. 217

- <sup>93</sup> See present edition, Vol. III, Moscow, 1976, pp. 117-37. p. 219

- <sup>94</sup> See present edition, Vol. III, Moscow, 1976, pp. 125-29. p. 220
- <sup>95</sup> See present edition, Vol. III, Moscow, 1976, p. 125. p. 223
- <sup>96</sup> K. Marx and F. Engels, *Collected Works*, Vol. 4, Moscow, 1975, p. 131. p. 227
- <sup>97</sup> *Saguntum*—a trading city in ancient Spain, which was under the protection of Rome. In 219 B.C. the inhabitants of Saguntum defended their city heroically for eight months against the army of the Carthaginian general Hannibal and preferred to die fighting rather than surrender. p. 238
- <sup>98</sup> See present edition, Vol. II, Moscow, 1976, pp. 31-182. p. 240
- <sup>99</sup> F. Engels, *Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy* (see K. Marx and F. Engels, *Selected Works*, [in three volumes], Vol. 3, Moscow, 1977, pp. 337-45).<sup>4</sup> p. 249
- <sup>100</sup> A reference to the Russian people's war of liberation against Napoleon I. p. 250
- <sup>101</sup> See Plekhanov's article "For the Sixtieth Anniversary of Hegel's Death" (present edition, Vol. I, Moscow, 1974, pp. 407-43). p. 251
- <sup>102</sup> A reference to *social Darwinism* which sought to apply to the sphere of social phenomena the laws of nature, in particular, the so-called law of the struggle for existence which operates within certain limits in the animal and vegetable kingdoms. p. 266
- <sup>103</sup> In his novel *What Is To Be Done?* Chernyshevsky uses the ironical expression, "clever reader", to denote the reactionary reader who is characterised by hypocrisy, banality and inordinate claims to depth of thought. p. 268
- <sup>104</sup> A reference to Guizot's *Histoire de la civilisation en Europe* and *Histoire de la civilisation en France*. p. 270
- <sup>105</sup> See present edition, Vol. I, Moscow, 1974, pp. 501-13. p. 271
- <sup>106</sup> K. Marx and F. Engels, *Collected Works*, Vol. 9, Moscow, 1977, p. 211. p. 273
- <sup>107</sup> K. Marx and F. Engels, *Collected Works*, Vol. 6, Moscow, 1976, pp. 514-15. p. 280
- <sup>108</sup> K. Marx and F. Engels, *Collected Works*, Vol. 6, Moscow, 1976, p. 517. p. 280
- <sup>109</sup> *Neue Rheinische Zeitung. Politisch-ökonomische Revue*—a journal published by Marx and Engels from December 1849 to November 1850. Six issues appeared altogether. The journal was edited in London and printed in Hamburg. It carried a number of articles by Marx and Engels. The journal ceased publication because of police persecution in Germany and lack of funds. p. 295
- <sup>110</sup> K. Marx and F. Engels, *Collected Works*, Vol. 10, Moscow, 1978, pp. 253-54. p. 296

- <sup>111</sup> Karl Marx, *Capital*, Vol. I, Moscow, 1977, p. 173. p. 296
- <sup>112</sup> See present edition, Vol. II, Moscow, 1976, pp. 283-315. p. 305
- <sup>113</sup> K. Marx and F. Engels, *Selected Works*, (in three volumes), Vol. 2, Moscow, 1977, p. 19. p. 307
- <sup>114</sup> K. Marx and F. Engels, *Collected Works*, Vol. 5, Moscow, 1976, p. 6. p. 310
- <sup>115</sup> See Note 80. p. 321
- <sup>116</sup> The article "More about the Art of Primitive Peoples" makes up the third letter in Plekhanov's *Unaddressed Letters* (see present edition, Vol. V). p. 326
- <sup>117</sup> See present edition, Vol. V. p. 326
- <sup>118</sup> *Rudin*—the main character in Turgenev's novel of the same name, *Bel-tov*—the main character in Herzen's novel *Who Is To Blame?*, *Sasha*—the heroine in Nekrasov's poem of the same name. p. 343
- <sup>119</sup> See Note 44. p. 348
- <sup>120</sup> *Edda*—a collection of ancient Icelandic mythological and heroic poems. *Bogatyry songs*—epic poems about knightly heroes. p. 350
- <sup>121</sup> As has been recently discovered, it was not Chernyshevsky but M. L. Mikhailov who wrote the article "Pleshcheyev's Poems". p. 353
- <sup>122</sup> A quotation from Griboyedov's comedy *Wit Works Woe*. p. 367
- <sup>123</sup> This article was written by Plekhanov in 1912, immediately after the publication of Chernyshevsky's letters from prison and exile in Vilyuisk by Y. Lyatsky and Chernyshevsky's son Mikhail. The article was published in 1913 in the *Sovremennik*—a literary and political monthly that appeared in St. Petersburg from 1911 to 1915. p. 368
- <sup>124</sup> In August 1866 Chernyshevsky's wife, together with their younger son Mikhail, came to Kadaya where N. G. Chernyshevsky was serving his term of hard labour. During their meeting he tried to persuade her to conclude a fictitious marriage with one of their friends, so as to protect her from police persecution. p. 368
- <sup>125</sup> A reference to the *Encyclopaedists*—a group of French eighteenth-century Enlighteners—philosophers, scientists and writers—who joined together to publish the *Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers* (1751-80). Diderot, D'Alembert, Holbach, Helvétius, Voltaire and others took part in publishing the *Encyclopaedia*. p. 375
- <sup>126</sup> Plekhanov is referring to the General Rules of the International Working Men's Association written by Karl Marx (see K. Marx and F. Engels, *Selected Works*, [in three volumes], Vol. 2, Moscow, 1977, p. 18). p. 382



- <sup>127</sup> The article "Belinsky and Rational Reality" was printed in 1897 in the legal journal *Novoye Slovo*, as the second article in the series "The Fate of Russian Criticism". Plekhanov signed it "N. Kamensky".  
*Novoye Slovo* (The New Word) was a monthly dealing with scientific, literary and political questions. It was published in St. Petersburg from 1894 to 1897. p. 387
- <sup>128</sup> *Koronat*—the main character in M. Y. Saltykov-Shchedrin's story of the same name. p. 389
- <sup>129</sup> F. Engels, *Anti-Dühring*, Moscow, 1978, p. 34. p. 394
- <sup>130</sup> The memoirs *My Past and Thoughts* were written by A. I. Herzen. p. 395
- <sup>131</sup> Plekhanov is quoting the main character in V. G. Belinsky's story *Dmitry Kalinin*. p. 400
- <sup>132</sup> *Wagner*—a character from Goethe's *Faust*. p. 405
- <sup>133</sup> A reference to V. G. Belinsky's review, "*Essays on the Battle of Borodino (Reminiscences of 1812)*". A book by F. Glinka, author of '*Letters of a Russian Officer*', Moscow, 1839". p. 409
- <sup>134</sup> A reference to V.G. Belinsky's article "Menzel, Goethe's Critic". p. 411
- <sup>135</sup> *Wigand's Vierteljahrsschrift*—a philosophical journal of the Young Hegelians, published by O. Wigand in Leipzig (1844-45). Among its contributors were B. Bauer, M. Stirner and L. Feuerbach. p. 422
- <sup>136</sup> *Essays on the Gogol Period of Russian Literature* were written by N. G. Chernyshevsky. p. 423
- <sup>137</sup> *Manilov*—a character in Gogol's *Dead Souls* who typifies a vain braggart and empty dreamer with a passive, complacent attitude to reality. p. 430
- <sup>138</sup> The author is speaking of M.A. Bakunin. p. 431
- <sup>139</sup> A reference to Plekhanov's article "V. G. Belinsky's Literary Views" which is to be found in Volume V of the present edition. p. 433
- <sup>140</sup> This address was published in Geneva (February 1899) as a pamphlet by the League of Russian Social-Democrats. p. 435
- <sup>141</sup> *Belinsky's Letter to Gogol* was written in July 1847 when Gogol published his book *Selected Passages from a Correspondence with Friends* in which he eulogised Russian autocracy and serfdom. Lenin described this *Letter* as "one of the finest productions of the illegal democratic press" (*Collected Works*, Vol. 20, p. 247). It was first published in 1855 in A. I. Herzen's *Polyarnaya Zvezda*. p. 435

- <sup>143</sup> Quoted from M. A. Dmitriev's poem "To an Anonymous Critic", in which the author denounces Belinsky. p. 437
- <sup>145</sup> *Russkoye Bogatstvo* (Russian Wealth)—a monthly published in St. Petersburg from 1876 to 1918. In the early 1890s it became the mouthpiece of the liberal Narodniks headed by N. K. Mikhailovsky; distorting and falsifying Marxism, it launched a campaign against the Social-Democrats and in defence of revisionism. p. 439
- <sup>144</sup> "Moderation and accuracy"—Molchalin's words from Griboyedov's *Wit Works Woe*. p. 446
- <sup>145</sup> A reference to Engels' work *Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy* the Russian translation of which made by Plekhanov was published in Geneva (1892) by the Emancipation of Labour group. p. 449
- <sup>146</sup> See *My Past and Thoughts*, Part IV. p. 451
- <sup>147</sup> See present edition, Vol. I, Moscow, 1974, pp. 401-26.  
*Die Neue Zeit*—a theoretical journal of the German Social-Democrats published in Stuttgart (1883-1923). From 1885 to 1894 the journal carried a number of works by Engels who constantly helped its editors with advice and often criticised them for deviating from Marxism. In the latter half of the 1890s articles by revisionists began to appear in the journal systematically. p. 454
- <sup>148</sup> Plekhanov is referring to the debates in the 1890s between Marxists and liberal Narodniks on the question of the development of capitalism in Russia. p. 455
- <sup>149</sup> From Pushkin's poem. p. 455
- <sup>150</sup> *Moskvityanin* (Muscovite)—a literary monthly published in Moscow from 1841 to 1856 by M. P. Pogodin. The *Moskvityanin*'s reactionary programme was based on the slogan "Orthodoxy, autocracy, and nationality". The journal directed its attacks against Belinsky and democratic journals. p. 460
- <sup>151</sup> T. G. Shevchenko was arrested on April 5, 1847, in connection with the case of the secret Cyril and Methodius society, and sent to the army as a soldier: he spent ten years in exile and was forbidden to write or draw. Belinsky's harsh and unjust opinion about Shevchenko is explained by his lack of information on the subject. p. 460
- <sup>152</sup> The concluding sentence of F. Engels' work *Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy* (K. Marx and F. Engels, *Selected Works* [in three volumes], Vol. 3, Moscow, 1977, p. 376). p. 461
- <sup>153</sup> Herzen wrote in his *Diary* on April 10, 1843, after reading excerpts from Gogol's *Dead Souls*: "Russia appeared before my eyes so vividly, and the question of the day was repeated so painfully, that I nearly burst into sobs. The sleep is long and heavy. Why have we awakened so early? We should have gone on sleeping, like everybody around. Enough!" p. 462

- <sup>154</sup> This is a mistake which recurs in all the editions of the address. It should read "Anacharsis of the new Scythia" (see this volume, p. 455). p. 462
- <sup>155</sup> These questions are dealt with in Plekhanov's article "V. G. Belinsky's Literary Views" which is to be found in Volume V of the present edition. p. 462
- <sup>156</sup> This article, written by Plekhanov in 1908, appeared in *A History of Nineteenth-Century Russian Literature* published by Mir Publishers in St. Petersburg (1909). p. 464
- <sup>157</sup> *Molva* (Humour)—a newspaper published in Moscow from 1831 to 1835 as a supplement to the journal *Teleskop*. It carried critical and polemical articles and bibliographical notes.  
*Teleskop* (Telescope), a journal dealing with literary and social problems, was published in Moscow from 1831 to 1836 by N. I. Nadezhdin. The journal advocated bringing philosophical theory closer to reality. Belinsky contributed to it from 1833. It was closed down in 1836 for publishing Chaadayev's "Philosophical Letter". p. 467
- <sup>158</sup> *Moskovsky Nablyudatel* (Moscow Observer)—a journal published in Moscow between 1835 and 1839. V. G. Belinsky was in charge of the journal in 1838-39 and made it one of the best of its day. p. 467
- <sup>159</sup> A reference to Gogol's work *Selected Passages from a Correspondence with Friends*. p. 501
- <sup>160</sup> This article was published in 1910 in the *Sovremenny Mir*.  
*Sovremenny Mir* (Contemporary World)—a monthly dealing with literary, scientific and political questions, published in St. Petersburg from 1906 to 1918. p. 505
- <sup>161</sup> *Hallische Jahrbücher*—the abbreviated title of the Young Hegelians' literary and philosophical journal. It was published in the form of daily sheets in Leipzig from January 1838 to June 1841 under the title of *Hallische Jahrbücher für deutsche Wissenschaft und Kunst*. Its editor in Halle was Arnold Ruge. p. 509
- <sup>162</sup> For the article "Vissarion Grigoryevich Belinsky" see this volume, pp. 464-504.  
 The article "V. G. Belinsky's Literary Views" is to be found in Volume V of the present edition. p. 514
- <sup>163</sup> *The Lay of Igor's Host*—a work of old Russian literature (twelfth century) which testifies to the high level of culture and political consciousness of the people. p. 515
- <sup>164</sup> See this volume, pp. 387-434 and 464-504. p. 519
- <sup>165</sup> Plekhanov did not write an article with this title. He probably used the preparatory material for the following articles, which appeared in the *Sovremenny Mir* in 1911-12: "M. P. Pogodin and the Class Struggle",

- "I. V. Kireyevsky" and "Concerning N. A. Berdyaev's book *A. S. Kholmjakov*". p. 524
- <sup>166</sup> See Note 68. p. 533
- <sup>167</sup> *Gostomysl*—according to the chronicles he was the first prince or *posadnik* of Novgorod in the ninth century. p. 534
- <sup>168</sup> See Note 69. p. 537
- <sup>169</sup> See this volume, pp. 464-504. p. 541
- <sup>170</sup> A reference to N. V. Gogol's comedy. p. 545
- <sup>171</sup> Plekhanov wrote the article "A. I. Herzen and Serfdom" in 1911 using several of his lectures on Herzen as a basis. It was originally meant to be published in the journal *Vestnik Yevropy* but for some unknown reason Plekhanov gave the article to the *Sovremenny Mir* where it appeared in the November and December issues.  
Plekhanov's article was printed shortly before Herzen's centenary; denouncing the official view of Herzen as a liberal, the author described him as a revolutionary. p. 557
- <sup>172</sup> *Kolokol* (The Bell)—a journal published by A. I. Herzen and N. P. Ogarev in London (from July 1, 1857 to April 1865) and in Geneva (from 1865 to July 1867) under the motto "Vivos voco!" ("I call upon the living"). The *Kolokol's* circulation ran to 2,500 copies and it was widely distributed in Russia. Exposing the arbitrary rule of autocracy, the avarice and embezzling of the officials, and the merciless exploitation of the peasants, the *Kolokol* issued revolutionary appeals and helped to rouse the masses for the fight against tsarist autocracy. p. 557
- <sup>173</sup> A reference to M. I. Glinka's operas "Life for the Tsar" and "Ruslan and Ludmila". p. 561
- <sup>174</sup> A reference to the war which the peasants waged against serfdom in 1773-75. Their leader was Yemelyan Pugachev. p. 567
- <sup>175</sup> The members of Stankevich's circle, who included T. N. Granovsky and V. G. Belinsky, were also interested in political questions; they, too, were "profoundly estranged from official Russia", to use Herzen's expression; however, the political attitude of some of its members, being enlightened in character, was more moderate than the attitude of Herzen's circle whose members for the most part held revolutionary and socialist views. Both circles attached great importance to philosophical and theoretical questions. p. 570
- <sup>176</sup> The date of arrest is inaccurate: Herzen was arrested in the small hours of July 21, 1834. p. 573
- <sup>177</sup> *Perun*—one of the main deities of the Eastern Slavs, the god of thunder and lightning. p. 574

- <sup>178</sup> A reference to G. V. Plekhanov's article "Herzen in Emigration".  
p. 578
- <sup>179</sup> *Sobakevich, Korobochka, Nozdrev and Manilov*—characters in Gogol's *Dead Souls*.  
p. 579
- <sup>180</sup> The date is wrong: Herzen delivered this speech on February 27, 1855.  
p. 588
- <sup>181</sup> *St. George's Day*—church feast celebrated on November 26. In the Russian state of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries this was the legally appointed day when peasants had the right to move from one landowner to another. The abolition of this right at the end of the sixteenth century was an important landmark in consolidating serfdom.  
p. 589
- <sup>182</sup> *Polyarnaya Zvezda* (Polar Star)—collections of articles published in 1855-62 by Herzen's Free Russian Press in London. Altogether eight issues appeared. They acquainted the readers with works of Russian writers and poets that were prohibited by the tsarist censorship, one of them being *Belinsky's Letter to Gogol*.  
p. 589
- <sup>183</sup> *R. Ch.*—*Russkii Chelovek* (A Russian)—the pseudonym of Ogarev.  
p. 589
- <sup>184</sup> N. K. Mikhailovsky proposed "the formula for progress" in 1869 in his work *What Is Progress?* The formula expressed an idealist subjectivist theory of social development, according to which historical development was to be assessed from the viewpoint of a certain ideal represented by a "developed individual". This "developed individual", i.e., the intelligentsia, was to play the decisive role in directing the process of historical development.  
p. 594
- <sup>185</sup> In his speech of March 30, 1856, addressed to the leaders of the Moscow nobility, Alexander II spoke of the need to introduce reforms. p. 600
- <sup>186</sup> In his rescript to Nazimov, the Governor-General of Wilna, Alexander II gave permission to the nobility of Lithuanian gubernias to start drafting proposals "for arranging and improving the life of landowners' peasants". The publication of this rescript was of political significance, because making the question of the abolition of serfdom public helped to strengthen the ideological and political struggle connected with the proposed reform.  
p. 601
- <sup>187</sup> A reference to N. I. Turgenev, one of the Decembrists, who lived in emigration.  
p. 606
- <sup>188</sup> "*Otrezki*" or "*cut-off lands*" were lands taken away from the peasants by the landowners during the abolition of serfdom in Russia (1861). The peasants were forced to lease them on onerous terms.  
p. 608
- <sup>189</sup> A reference to a special tax imposed on Russian merchants who prior to 1863 were divided into three guilds according to the amount of capital they possessed.  
p. 609
- <sup>190</sup> Until February 1858, the pseudonym *R. Ch.*—*Russkii Chelovek* (A Russian) was used by Ogarev to sign his articles in the *Kolokol*. Some letters from

Russia also bore this pseudonym. Many scholars believe that in this case the pseudonym was used by Chernyshevsky or one of his close associates.  
p. 611

<sup>191</sup> The speech was made on February 27, 1855. p. 618

<sup>192</sup> *Zemlya i Volya* (Land and Freedom)—a secret society in Russia organised by revolutionary democrats. It emerged in the middle of 1861 following an agreement between the St. Petersburg (N. A. and A. A. Serno-Solovyevich, N. A. Obruchev and others) and London (A. I. Herzen and N. P. Ogarev) centres of the Russian revolutionary movement. The principal task of the Land and Freedom society was to prepare a general peasant uprising. The organisation disintegrated in 1864 as a result of the decline in the revolutionary movement in Russia. p. 624

<sup>193</sup> *Obshcheye Veche* (General Assembly)—a supplement to the *Kolokol*, published as a leaflet between 1862 and 1864. Herzen intended that it should become a revolutionary organ addressed to the masses. The *Obshcheye Veche* was not widely circulated, however, and became an organ of the Old Believers. p. 625

<sup>194</sup> *Narodnaya Volya* (People's Will)—a secret political organisation of Narodnik terrorists that came into being in August 1879. The Narodnaya Volya members embarked upon the path of political struggle, considering their most important task to be the overthrowing of autocracy and the winning of political liberty. They carried on an heroic struggle against autocracy but, proceeding from the fallacious theory of active "heroes" and the passive "mass", they hoped to recast society without the participation of the people, by means of terrorising individuals, and intimidating and disorganising the government. After the assassination of Alexander II on March 1, 1881, the government carried out brutal repression and executions to break up the Narodnaya Volya. p. 631

<sup>195</sup> This article was written on the occasion of A. I. Herzen's centenary and published in the journal *Sovremennyy Mir*. p. 634

<sup>196</sup> See this volume, pp. 388-434. p. 634

<sup>197</sup> This entry in Herzen's *Diary* is dated June 29. p. 636

<sup>198</sup> The title of Wilhelm Jordan's article is "Die Philosophie und die Allgemeine Wissenschaft, ein Beitrag zur Kritik der Philosophie überhaupt". p. 636

<sup>199</sup> Herzen read the book *Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's Leben* (Berlin, 1844), written by Hegel's disciple, Karl Rosenkranz, a German idealist philosopher. p. 639

<sup>200</sup> See F. Engels, *Anti-Dühring*, Moscow, 1978, p. 58. p. 646

<sup>201</sup> See Plekhanov's article "Materialism Yet Again" (present edition, Vol. II, p. 415). p. 647

<sup>202</sup> K. Marx and F. Engels, *Selected Works* (in three volumes), Vol. 3, Moscow, 1977, p. 348. p. 647

- <sup>203</sup> *Bersenev*—the main character in I. S. Turgenev's novel *On the Eve*.  
p. 649
- <sup>204</sup> The full title is *Deutsche Jahrbücher für Wissenschaft und Kunst*, a literary and philosophical journal of the Young Hegelians published by Arnold Ruge in Leipzig (1841-43) as the successor to the *Hallische Jahrbücher* (see Note 161). It was closed down by the government.  
p. 651
- <sup>205</sup> F. Engels, *Anti-Dühring*, Moscow, 1978, p. 31 et seq. p. 655
- <sup>206</sup> F. Engels, *Anti-Dühring*, Moscow, 1978, p. 33. p. 657
- <sup>207</sup> See present edition, Vol. I, Moscow, 1974, pp. 401-26. p. 661
- <sup>208</sup> Saint-Simon's disciples and followers Enfantin and Bazard were proclaimed "father superiors" of the religious community that was formed from the Saint-Simonist school. Enfantin became its priest who officiated at marriages, christenings, burials, etc. p. 667
- <sup>209</sup> See this volume, pp. 270-314. p. 680
- <sup>210</sup> In his letters to Herzen the Slavophil Y. F. Samarin accused him of luring the young people on to the wrong path by preaching materialism and atheism and disseminating revolutionary ideas. p. 684
- <sup>211</sup> Prince V. A. Cherkassky was a Russian political figure and journalist close to the Slavophiles. In one of his articles printed when the 1861 Reform was being prepared, he suggested that even after the liberation of the peasants the landowners should have the right to subject them to corporal punishment (up to 18 birchings). The article drew a sharp protest from progressive intellectuals. p. 685
- <sup>212</sup> See this volume, pp. 559-60. p. 688
- <sup>213</sup> Plekhanov delivered this speech by A. I. Herzen's graveside in Nice in connection with his centenary. It was published in the Russian section of the journal *L'Avenir* which appeared in Paris in both French and Russian. p. 689
- <sup>214</sup> This was a national liberation insurrection directed against the oppression by the tsarist autocracy. The insurrection was headed by the Central National Committee. Its demands included national independence for Poland, equal rights for all men irrespective of religion and origin, and the transfer of all arable land to the peasants without redemption. For this reason the insurrection received support from the broadest sections of the Polish population.  
Russian revolutionary democrats felt profound sympathy for the insurgents. The *Zemlya i Volya* (Land and Freedom) society issued an appeal distributed in the army. A. I. Herzen and N. P. Ogarev wrote a number of articles for the *Kolokol* in which they described the struggle of the Polish people; they also rendered material assistance to the insurgents.  
In the summer of 1864 the insurrection was cruelly suppressed by tsarist troops. p. 690

- <sup>215</sup> The three reviews published in the present volume of books by M. O. Herschensohn, a bourgeois historian of Russian culture, literary critic and publicist, belong to a series of articles by Plekhanov directed against the counter-revolutionary ideology in the period of reaction following the defeat of the 1905-07 Revolution in Russia. Herschensohn's political attitude was revealed in his article published in the collection *Vekhi* that marked the departure of the liberal bourgeois intelligentsia from the traditions of Russian revolutionary thought.

In his reviews of Herschensohn's books Plekhanov found it necessary, on the one hand, to underline the wealth of factual material given by the author and, on the other, to reveal the harmful, reactionary nature of the turn towards mysticism made by Russian bourgeois intellectuals.

The reviews were published in the journal *Sovremenniy Mir*: "P. Y. Chaadayev" in No. 1 for 1908; "M. Herschensohn's book *The History of Young Russia*, Moscow, 1908" in No. 5 for 1908; and "M. Herschensohn's book *Historical Notes* (on Russian Society), Moscow, 1910" in No. 4 for 1910. p. 695

- <sup>216</sup> Chaadayev's first "Philosophical Letter" was published on September 29, 1836 in the journal *Teleskop*. p. 699

- <sup>217</sup> This refers to the three "principles" of official ideology: "Orthodoxy, autocracy, and nationality". These reactionary principles were formulated in the early 1830s by S. S. Uvarov, tsarist Minister of Public Education, and advanced as a programme for educating young people. p. 702

- <sup>218</sup> In the early 1820s Chaadayev, then living in St. Petersburg, was closely associated with the Decembrists and joined their secret society, the Union of the Public Weal. During the uprising of December 14, 1825 he was abroad. p. 706

- <sup>219</sup> A reference to A. V. Lunacharsky's articles which appeared in 1908-11 as a separate edition entitled *Religion and Socialism*.

*Obrazovaniye* (Education)—a legal monthly dealing with literary, scientific and socio-political questions. It appeared in St. Petersburg from 1892 to 1909. p. 708

- <sup>220</sup> *Rus*—a liberal-bourgeois daily of moderate views that appeared in St. Petersburg from December 1903 to December 1905. p. 713

- <sup>221</sup> See this volume, pp. 387-434. p. 714

- <sup>222</sup> *Vekhi* (Landmarks)—a collection of articles by prominent Constitutional-Democratic publicists, spokesmen of the counter-revolutionary liberal bourgeois intelligentsia, that was published in Moscow in the spring of 1909. In their articles about the Russian intelligentsia contributors to *Vekhi* sought to discredit the revolutionary-democratic traditions of the liberation movement in Russia as well as the views of Belinsky, Dobrolyubov and Chernyshevsky; they sought to denigrate the revolutionary movement of 1905 and thanked the tsarist government for suppressing the revolution. p. 718

- <sup>223</sup> Plekhanov is referring to the fact that Bulgakov, once a "legal Marxist", changed to a religious world outlook and later became a priest. p. 719



- <sup>224</sup> In his book Herschensohn analyses the ideology of the Slavophiles and their controversy with the Westerners. p. 722
- <sup>225</sup> *Vestnik Yevropy* (European Messenger)—an historico-political and literary monthly published in St. Petersburg from 1866 to 1918. Its articles were directed against revolutionary Marxists.  
*Russkaya Mysl* (Russian Thought)—a literary and political monthly published in Moscow from 1880 to 1918; the organ of the Right wing of the Constitutional-Democratic Party following the 1905 Revolution; it preached nationalism, *Vekhi*-ism, and obscurantism, and defended land-owner interests. p. 722
- <sup>226</sup> A reference to the "*legal Marxists*"—representatives of a socio-political trend among Russia's liberal bourgeois intelligentsia in the 1890s. They sought to utilise Marxism in the interests of the bourgeoisie, by revising its basic propositions and discarding its revolutionary conclusions. They wrote articles for legal journals in which they extolled capitalism and called upon people "to acknowledge our lack of culture and learn from capitalism". p. 722
- <sup>227</sup> "*Nonsensical dreams*"—an expression used by Nicholas II in his speech of January 17, 1895 before the deputies from Zemstvos and towns in response to their hopes for a constitution. p. 722
- <sup>228</sup> *Black Hundreds*—monarchist gangs organised by the tsarist police to combat the revolutionary movement. Members of the Black Hundreds assassinated revolutionaries, attacked progressive intellectuals and organised Jewish pogroms. p. 723
- <sup>229</sup> K. Marx and F. Engels, *Collected Works*, Vol. 4, Moscow, 1975, p. 131. p. 726
- <sup>230</sup> Plekhanov's review of Bogucharsky's book was published in the *Sovremennyy Mir* in 1912. p. 728

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- Feuerbach, Ludwig Andreas* (1804-1872)—great pre-Marxian materialist philosopher.—63, 72-73, 80, 91, 93, 111, 159, 168, 183, 214-23, 227-28, 230-31, 232, 237, 248-49, 252, 254, 257, 263, 267, 270, 277-78, 295,

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- Fichte, Johann Gottlieb* (1762-1814)—German philosopher, subjective idealist.—72, 84, 256, 373-75, 402, 405, 407, 472-74, 481, 489, 505, 640, 642, 644, 683-84
- Filippson, Grigory Ivanovitch* (1809-1883)—tsarist general, Administrator of the St. Petersburg Educational District (1861-62).—53, 165
- Filosofov, Dmitri Vladimirovich* (1872-1940)—Russian critic and publicist, decadent and mystic.—229
- Fonvizin, Denis Ivanovich* (1744-1792)—Russian writer.—179-80, 182, 490, 523, 528
- Foscolo, Niccolò* (1778-1827)—Italian poet, participant in the struggle for the national liberation of Italy.—703
- Fourier, François Marie Charles* (1772-1837)—French utopian socialist.—100-01, 152, 210, 212, 277, 279-80, 299, 442, 671, 685
- Frolov, Nikolai Grigoryevitch* (1812-1855)—Russian journalist and geographer.—719
- Fromentin, Eugène* (1820-1876)—French writer and painter.—333
- Fyodorov, Konstantin Mikhailovich*—secretary of N.G. Chernyshevsky during the last years of Chernyshevsky's life in Saratov.—172, 177, 183, 206-07
- G**
- Gagarin, Ivan Sergeyevich, Prince* (1814-1882)—member of literary groups in Russia in the 1830s; later became a Catholic and joined the Society of Jesus.—709
- Galakhov, Ivan Pavlovich* (1809-1849)—Russian scientist, was close to the circle of Herzen and Ogarev.—716
- Galilei, Galileo* (1564-1642)—Italian physicist and astronomer.—69, 184
- Gan, Ivan Alexeyevich*—author of a book on the way of life of the lower middle class in the Saratov province.—129
- Gassendi, Pierre* (1592-1655)—French materialist philosopher.—237
- Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire, Étienne* (1772-1844)—French zoologist, evolutionist, a predecessor of Darwin.—225, 263
- Germogen (Dolganev, Georgi Yefremovich)* (1858-1918)—bishop, extreme reactionary.—691
- Gleim, Johann Wilhelm Ludwig* (1719-1803)—German poet.—247
- Glinka, Fyodor Nikolayevich* (1786-1830)—Russian poet and writer, author of *Essays on the Battle of Borodino*.—335, 421, 454, 480, 509
- Glinka, Mikhail Ivanovich* (1804-1857)—Russian composer.—561
- Godwin, William* (1756-1836)—British writer and publicist, a forefather of anarchism.—207
- Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von* (1749-1832)—German writer and thinker.—150, 182, 184, 209, 318, 333-34, 397, 410, 495, 511, 680
- Gogol, Nikolai Vasilyevich* (1809-1852)—Russian writer.—58, 67-68, 113, 120, 126, 196, 316-19, 321, 337, 349, 435, 460, 488, 496, 500-01, 532, 555, 579-80, 583, 666
- Gogotsky, Silvestr Silvestrovich* (1813-1889)—Russian idealist philosopher, compiler of the *Philosophical Lexicon*.—237
- Golokhvastov, Dmitri Pavlovich* (1796-1849)—Deputy Administrator of the Moscow Educational District, on whose initiative V. G. Belinsky was expelled from the University.—557
- Goncharov, Ivan Alexandrovich* (1812-1891)—Russian writer.—563
- Gracchus, Tiberius Sempronius* (163-133 B.C.) and his brother *Gaius Sempronius* (153-121

- B.C.)—Roman tribunes, representatives of slave-owning democracy.—87, 97, 284
- Granovsky, Timofei Nikolayevich* (1813-1855)—progressive Russian historian and public figure.—270-73, 295, 303, 388, 390, 412-13, 428, 439-40, 471, 482, 551-52, 570, 620, 648, 716
- Grech, Nikolai Ivanovich* (1787-1867)—Russian reactionary journalist and writer.—198
- Grigorovich, Dmitri Vasilyevich* (1822-1899)—Russian writer.—119, 120, 349, 441
- Grimm, Jakob* (1785-1863) and his brother *Wilhelm* (1786-1859)—German philologists and historians of the German language and culture.—274
- Grün, Karl* (1817-1887)—German petty-bourgeois publicist; adherent of "true socialism"; publisher of Feuerbach's literary heritage.—218, 543, 647, 673, 680, 683-84
- Guizot, François Pierre Guillaume* (1787-1874)—French historian and statesman.—86-88, 270-71, 273, 282, 288-92, 294-96, 306, 314, 426, 517

## H

- Haeckel, Ernst* (1834-1919)—German naturalist, Darwinist; in philosophy, spontaneous materialist.—657
- Hannibal* (c. 247-183 B.C.)—Carthaginian general.—238
- Haxthausen, August von* (1792-1866)—Prussian official, author of treatises on the agrarian relations in Prussia and Russia.—62, 104, 161
- Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich* (1770-1831)—German philosopher, objective idealist; elaborated dialectics in detail.—58-60, 61-63, 72-73, 76, 80, 84, 91, 93-95, 96, 100, 113, 127-29, 159, 161-62, 183, 215-16, 217, 225, 230, 237, 248-51, 252-53, 256, 259, 263, 266, 278, 290, 296, 322, 329-30, 334-36, 340, 355, 373-75, 387-88, 394-400, 405-06, 407-08, 411-13, 416-26, 441, 448-49, 451-55, 481, 466, 469-71, 473-75, 478-80, 483, 486-87, 490-92, 493, 496, 498-501, 505-07, 508-12, 518-19, 522-23, 525-26, 534, 537, 539-42, 543-48, 578, 627-28, 634-36, 638-41, 642-44, 646, 650-58, 659-64, 667, 668-69, 671-75, 677-79, 681, 683, 686-87, 692, 715, 719, 720, 723, 733
- Heine, Heinrich* (1797-1856)—German poet.—689
- Helvétius, Claude Adrien* (1715-1771)—French materialist philosopher, atheist.—81, 240, 312, 450, 647, 701
- Heracitus of Ephesus* (c. 540-480 B.C.)—Greek materialist philosopher; a founder of dialectics.—111, 652, 654-56
- Herbel, Nikolai Vasilyevich* (1827-1883)—Russian poet and translator, publisher of European classics.—342
- Herder, Johann Gottfried von* (1744-1803)—German writer and philosopher, enlightener.—689
- Herschensohn, Mikhail Ostpovich* (1869-1925)—Russian literary critic and publicist, contributor to the counter-revolutionary collection *Vekhi*.—697-700, 702-05, 707-12, 719-27
- Herzen, Alexander Ivanovich* (1812-1870)—Russian revolutionary democrat, materialist philosopher, publicist and writer; in 1847 he emigrated abroad and organised the Free Russian Press where he published the periodical collection *Polyarnaya Zvezda* (Polar Star) and the newspaper *Kolokol* (The Bell).—55, 63, 116, 132, 135, 147, 150, 156-58, 160, 164, 183, 194-95, 198, 210, 285-87, 288, 388, 390, 395, 401, 412, 422-24, 429-30, 436, 439-40, 441, 444, 445, 446, 448, 453, 456, 466, 469, 472, 478, 482, 485, 502-03, 506, 528, 557-59, 559-71, 573-806, 608, 610-38, 640-52, 653-93, 698-99, 705, 707, 710-11, 714-15, 719, 721, 728-33
- Hess, Moses* (1812-1875)—German petty-bourgeois publicist, one of the chief representatives of "true socialism".—662, 683



*Hildebrand, Bruno* (1812-1878)—German economist, representative of the so-called historical school in political economy.—104

*Hilferding, Alexander Fyodorovich* (1831-1872)—Russian Slavonic scholar, historian and collector of Russian *bylinas*.—178

*Hobbes, Thomas* (1588-1679)—English materialist philosopher.—84, 255, 422, 647, 659

*Holbach, Paul Henri* (1723-1789)—French materialist philosopher.—73-75, 234, 240, 244, 373-75, 641, 647, 659, 660

*Homer*—semi-legendary Greek epic poet.—297, 333, 350

*Horace (Quintus Horatius Flaccus)* (65-8 B.C.)—Roman poet.—330, 540

*Humboldt, Alexander von* (1769-1859)—German naturalist and traveller.—69, 184

*Hume, David* (1711-1776)—English philosopher, subjective idealist, agnostic.—373-75, 659

## I

*Innocent III* (1160-1216)—Pope in 1198-1216; strived for Rome's political hegemony over all European states.—291

*Iskander*—see *Herzen, A.I.*

*Ivanov, Dmitri Petrovich* (1812-1880s)—relative of V.G. Belinsky, author of memoirs about him.—464

*Ivanov, Mikhail Mikhailovitch* (1849-1927)—Russian musicologist and composer.—561

*Ivanov, Vyacheslav Ivanovich* (1866-1949)—Russian poet, theoretician of symbolism.—229

*Ivanov-Razumnik* (pseudonym of *Ivanov, Razumnik Vasilyevich*) (1878-1945)—Russian literary critic and publicist.—350, 594

## J

*Jodl, Friedrich* (1849-1914)—professor of philosophy at Prague and Vienna universities, positivist.—374

*Jordan, Wilhelm* (1819-1904)—German writer and public figure.—422, 636-37, 646, 651

*Julian the Apostate*—Roman emperor (361-63); tried to restore pagan religion.—602

*Jung-Stilling, Johann Heinrich* (1740-1817)—German writer, mystic.—704

*Junot, Andoche* (1771-1813)—Marshal in Napoleon's army.—305

## K

*Kalachev, Nikolai Vasilyevich* (1819-1885)—Russian publisher and editor of historical and legal literary monuments.—272

*Kant, Immanuel* (1724-1804)—German philosopher; founder of classical German idealism.—84, 242, 251, 255, 257, 319, 325, 362, 373-75, 642, 645, 723-24

*Kantemir, Antiokh Dmitriyevich* (1708-1744)—Russian enlightener, writer, philosopher and diplomat.—467, 490

*Kapnist, Vasily Vasilyevich* (1757-1823)—Russian playwright and poet.—490-91

*Karakozov, Dmitri Vladimirovich* (1840-1866)—Russian revolutionary who made an unsuccessful attempt on the life of Alexander II in 1866.—155

*Karakozov, Pyotr Nikiforovich*—a Saratov priest.—176, 184

*Karamzin, Nikolai Mikhailovich* (1766-1826)—Russian writer and historian.—317, 437, 523, 702

*Katkov, Mikhail Nikiforovich* (1818-1887)—Russian reactionary publicist, in the 1840s sided with the liberal circles.—66, 133, 229, 408, 466

*Kavelin, Konstantin Dmitriyevich* (1818-1885)—Russian historian and lawyer, liberal.—198, 428, 440, 482, 573, 599, 618, 624

*Keppen, Pyotr Ivanovich* (1793-1864)—Russian statistician, geographer and ethnographer.—605

*Ketcher, Nikolai Khristoforovich* (c. 1806-1886)—physician, poet

- and translator; member of A.I. Herzen's circle; later liberal.—568
- Khanykov, Alexander Vladimirovich* (1825-1853)—participant in the Russian emancipation movement.—533
- Kheraskov, Mikhail Matveyevich* (1733-1807)—Russian writer.—490
- Khomyakov, Alezei Stepanovich* (1804-1860)—Russian writer, an ideologist of Slavophilism.—520, 523-24, 552, 595, 620, 647, 723
- Kireyevsky, Ivan Vasilyevich* (1806-1856)—Russian publicist, Slavophil, mystic philosopher.—521-22, 524-25, 552, 557-58, 578, 597, 658, 723
- Kireyevsky, Pyotr Vasilyevich* (1808-1856)—Slavophil, folklorist.—520-21, 524, 559-60, 578
- Kirsha Danilov*—the assumed compiler of the first collection of Russian *bylinas* written down in the second half of the 18th century.—523
- Kiryakov*—Russian general; took part in the defence of Sevastopol in 1854.—50
- Kolesnikov, Vasily Pavlovich* (1804-1862)—Decembrist.—534
- Koltsov, Alezei Vasilyevich* (1809-1842)—Russian poet.—456, 467, 482, 495
- Korj, Modest Andreyevich* (1800-1876)—Russian political figure; author of the book *Ascension to the Throne of the Emperor Nicholas I.*—141, 591
- Korj, Nikolai Ivanovich* (1793-1869)—General of Artillery.—50
- Kornilov, Alexander Alezevich* (1801-1856)—Governor of Vyatka.—575
- Korolenko, Vladimir Galaktionovich* (1853-1921)—Russian writer and public figure.—206, 213-14
- Koshelev, Alexander Ivanovich* (1806-1883)—Russian publicist, Slavophil.—552, 559-60
- Kostomarov, Nikolai Ivanovich* (1817-1885)—historian and writer, an ideologist of Ukrainian bourgeois nationalism.—378
- Kostomarov, Vsevolod Dmitriyevich* (1839-end of the 1860s)—writer and translator; ill-famed for his slanderous testimony at N.G. Chernyshevsky's trial.—147
- Kotlyarevsky, Nestor Alexandrovich* (1863-1925)—Russian historian of literature.—566-67
- Krayevsky, Andrei Alexandrovich* (1810-1889)—Russian publicist, liberal, publisher of the magazine *Otechestvenniye Zapiski.*—68, 178
- Kritsky, Vasily* (1810-1831) and his brothers *Pyotr* (1809-1836) and *Mikhail* (1806-after 1855)—members of the secret society of the Decembrists' followers (1827).—534
- Krupensky, Pavel Nikolayevich* (b. 1863)—big landowner, member of the Second, Third and Fourth Dumas, reactionary.—691
- Krylov, Ivan Andreyevich* (1769-1844)—Russian fabulist.—198, 523
- Kudryavtsev, Pyotr Nikolayevich* (1816-1858)—Russian historian and author; friend of T.N. Granovsky.—537
- Kushelev-Bezborodko, Grigory Alexandrovich* (d. 1876)—writer; publisher of the magazine *Russkoye Slovo.*—164
- Kutorga, Mikhail Semyonovich* (1809-1886)—Russian historian and censor.—273

## L

- La Fontaine, Jean de* (1621-1695)—French fabulist.—523
- Lakhtin, Alezei Kuzmich* (1808-1838)—member of the student circle of A.I. Herzen in the 1830s.—568
- Lamarck, Jean Baptiste Pierre Antoine* (1744-1829)—French naturalist.—225, 262-63
- La Mettrie, Julien Offroy de* (1709-1751)—French materialist philosopher and atheist.—219, 235, 263, 647
- Lange, Friedrich Albert* (1828-1875)—German neo-Kantian philosopher.—217

- Lannes, Jean* (1769-1809)—Marshal of France under Napoleon.—305
- Lassalle, Ferdinand* (1825-1864)—German petty-bourgeois publicist, an opportunist leader of the German labour movement.—106-07, 111, 113, 124, 167-68, 301, 449, 649-50, 723
- Lavrov, Pyotr Lavrovich* (pseudonym *Mirtov*) (1823-1900)—Russian sociologist and publicist, an ideologist of Narodism.—187, 214-15, 229, 247, 267-69, 663, 679
- Le Dantec, Felix* (1869-1917)—French biologist.—219
- Leibnitz, Gottfried Wilhelm von* (1646-1716)—German scientist and idealist philosopher.—69, 184, 377, 639, 648, 656
- Lemke, Mikhail Konstantinovich* (1872-1923)—historian of the Russian literature and the revolutionary movement, collector of valuable historical and literary documents; editor of A.I. Herzen's works.—178, 185-86, 201, 205, 207, 214, 286
- Leontiev, Pavel Mikhailovich* (1822-1874)—professor of classical philology, archaeologist.—273
- Lermontov, Mikhail Yuryevich* (1814-1841)—Russian poet.—365, 383, 566-67, 568, 678
- Lerouz, Pierre* (1797-1871)—French utopian socialist; representative of Christian socialism.—671, 678
- Lessing, Gotthold Ephraim* (1729-1781)—German enlightener, critic, publicist and playwright.—58, 182, 208, 247, 268, 304, 315-16, 318, 330, 333-34, 399, 496, 664, 689, 703
- Leucippus* (5th cent. B.C.)—Greek materialist philosopher; founder of the ancient atomistic theory.—375
- Levitov, Alexander Ivanovich* (1835-1877)—Russian writer of the democratic trend.—439
- Lewes, George Henry* (1817-1878)—English positivist philosopher and Darwinist physiologist.—359
- Liebig, Justus von* (1803-1873)—German chemist.—69, 184
- Liebknecht, Wilhelm* (1826-1900)—a leader of German Social-Democracy.—113
- Littré, Mazimilien Paul Emile* (1801-1881)—French positivist philosopher.—221, 422, 432, 457
- Livy (Livius, Titus)* (59 B.C.—A.D. 17)—Roman historian.—88
- Locke, John* (1632-1704)—English materialist philosopher; worked out a sensualist theory of knowledge.—84, 237, 255, 373-75
- Lomonosov, Mikhail Vasilyevich* (1711-1765)—Russian scientist and poet.—437, 523
- Lorer, Nikolai Ivanovich* (1795-1873)—Decembrist, author of memoirs about Decembrists.—717
- Louis XV* (1710-1774)—King of France (1715-74).—305, 529 30
- Louis XVI* (1754-1793)—King of France (1774-92), guillotined by order of the Convention.—305, 451, 559, 567
- Louis XVIII* (1755-1824)—King of France (1814-24).—102
- Louis, Paul* (1872-1955)—French socialist, journalist, author of works on the history of the working-class movement in France.—571
- Louis Philippe* (1773-1850)—King of France (1830-48).—604, 669
- Lucretia* (6th cent. B.C.)—noble Roman woman who, according to the legend, was dishonoured by Sextus Tarquinius, king's son, and committed suicide.—82, 238-39
- Lunacharsky, Anatoly Vasilyevich* (1875-1933)—professional revolutionary, prominent Soviet statesman and public figure. In the period of reaction (1907-10) made a Machist revision of Marxism and professed god-building.—229, 648, 662, 708
- Lyaskovsky, Valery Nikolayevich*—author of books on the Slavophiles I.V. and P.V. Kireyevsky and A.S. Khomyakov.—558

*Lyatsky, Yevgeny Alexandrovich* (b. 1868)—literary critic.—169-70, 173, 175-76, 177-78, 368  
*Lysippus* (4th cent. B.C.)—Greek sculptor.—331

## M

*M.B.*—see *Bakunin, M.A.*  
*Mach, Ernst* (1838-1916)—Austrian physicist and idealist philosopher; a founder of empirio-criticism.—257, 657, 659  
*Malthus, Thomas Robert* (1766-1834)—English economist, advanced a reactionary theory of population.—186, 261, 266, 377  
*Marheineke, Philipp* (1780-1846)—German theologian and historian of Christianity; Right Hegelian.—650-51  
*Marlinsky, Alexander* (pseudonym of *Bestuzhev, Alexander Alexandrovich* (1797-1837)—Russian writer, Decembrist.—336  
*Marmont, Auguste Frédéric Louis* (1774-1852)—Marshal of France under Napoleon.—305  
*Marx, Karl* (1818-1883)—60, 62-63, 80, 91, 100-01, 107, 110-12, 159, 197, 227-28, 240, 251-52, 257, 267, 273, 278, 280, 295-97, 299-301, 303, 305, 307, 310, 340, 345, 376, 449, 461, 480, 519, 527, 535, 541, 560, 628, 653, 656, 661, 664, 671, 673, 679, 683, 722-24, 726  
*Maslov*—member of A.I. Herzen's student circle.—568  
*Mazzini, Giuseppe* (1805-1872)—Italian democrat, active figure in the national liberation movement.—669  
*Mehring, Franz* (1846-1919)—prominent figure in the German working-class movement, Marxist theoretician.—295, 330  
*Mendelssohn, Moses* (1729-1786)—German idealist philosopher, public figure in the period of the German Enlightenment.—247  
*Menzel, Wolfgang* (1798-1873)—German critic and writer.—388, 411, 480, 519  
*Merezhkovsky, Dmitri Sergeyevich* (1866-1941)—Russian decadent writer, mystic.—684

*Meshcherskaya, Sofia Sergeyevna* (1775-1848)—Russian writer and translator.—711  
*Meyer, Eduard* (1855-1930)—German historian of the ancient world, advocate of the theory of development of society in cycles.—284  
*Michelet, Jules* (1798-1874)—French petty-bourgeois historian.—587  
*Michelet, Karl Ludwig* (1801-1893)—German idealist philosopher, Hegelian.—650-51  
*Mickiewicz, Adam* (1798-1855)—Polish poet.—581  
*Mignet, François Auguste Marie* (1796-1884)—French historian of liberal trend.—426, 517  
*Mikhailov, Alexander Dmitriyevich* (1855-1884)—Russian revolutionary, Narodnik.—631  
*Mikhailov, Mikhail Larionovich* (1829-1865)—Russian poet and publicist, revolutionary democrat.—164, 195  
*Mikhailovsky, Nikolai Konstantinovich* (1842-1904)—Russian sociologist and publicist, ideologist of liberal Narodism.—213-14, 226, 248, 267-68, 280, 362, 389-90, 414, 431, 534, 594, 604, 662, 666, 681, 710  
*Mill, John Stuart* (1806-1873)—English positivist philosopher and economist.—91-93, 145-46, 185-86, 223, 287, 373-75, 377  
*Millet, Jean-François* (1642-1679)—Dutch landscape painter.—333  
*Milton, John* (1608-1674)—English poet and publicist; prominent figure in the 17th-century bourgeois revolution.—84, 255  
*Milyutin, Dmitri Alexeyevich* (1816-1912)—Russian statesman and prominent military figure.—53  
*Mitrabeau, Honoré Gabriel Victor Riquetti* (1749-1791)—prominent figure in the 18th-century bourgeois revolution.—424  
*Moleschott, Jacob* (1822-1893)—Dutch philosopher and physiologist, representative of vulgar materialism.—62-63, 72, 215, 218-19, 359, 647, 681

- Molière, Jean Baptiste (Poquelin)* (1622-1673)—French dramatist.—77, 182
- Montesquieu, Charles Louis* (1689-1755)—French enlightener, sociologist and political figure.—84, 255, 281, 285
- Morgan, Lewis Henry* (1818-1881)—American ethnographer, investigator of primitive society.—80
- Murat, Joachim* (1767-1815)—Marshal of France; King of Naples (1810-15).—305
- Murav'ov, Mikhail Nikolayevich* (1796-1866)—statesman in tsarist Russia; brutally suppressed the 1863 uprising in Poland.—155
- Myakotin, Venedikt Alexandrovich* (1867-1937)—Russian historian, publicist, liberal Narodnik.—459, 460

## N

- N. —on—*see *Danielson, N. F.*
- Nadezhdin, Nikolai Ivanovich* (1804-1856)—Russian literary critic and journalist.—114, 126, 192, 196, 317, 387-88, 401, 466, 467, 486
- Napoleon I* (1769-1821)—French Emperor (1804-14 and 1815).—84, 256, 275, 304-05
- Napoleon III (Louis Bonaparte)* (1808-1873)—French Emperor (1852-70).—48, 108, 604
- Naumov, Alexei Avvakumovich* (1840-1895)—Russian painter.—444-45, 502
- Nazimov, Vladimir Ivanovich* (1802-1874)—statesman in tsarist Russia, Governor-General of Lithuanian and Byelorussian provinces (1855-63).—601
- Nelyudov, Filipp Diomidovich* (1838-1902)—Russian writer, Narodnik.—439
- Nekrasov, Nikolai Alexeyevich* (1821-1878)—Russian poet, democrat.—113, 122, 157, 178, 192, 343, 372, 382-83, 441, 447, 467, 702
- Neukirch, Ivan Yakovlevich* (1803-1870)—professor of Greek philology at Kiev University.—178

- Neverov, Yanuari Mikhailovich* (1810-1893)—pedagogue, author of pedagogical works and memoirs.—388, 413
- Newton, Isaac* (1642-1727)—English physicist, astronomer and mathematician; founder of classical mechanics.—69, 158, 184, 656
- Ney, Michel* (1769-1815)—Marshal of France, a close associate of Napoleon I.—305
- Nezelenov, Alexander Ilytch* (1845-1896)—historian of Russian literature.—533
- Nicholas I* (1796-1855)—Emperor of Russia (1825-55).—45, 48, 50-53, 54-55, 58-59, 69, 165, 210, 459-60, 532-33, 591, 594, 596, 601, 614, 624, 717, 728
- Nikitenko, Alexander Vasilyevich* (1805-1877)—Russian literary figure of a liberal trend, critic, censor.—421, 526, 544, 597
- Nikoladze, Niko Yakovlevich* (1843-1928)—Georgian revolutionary democrat, publicist and literary critic.—604
- Nikolai —on—*see *Danielson, N. F.*
- Noskov, Mikhail Pavlovich*—member of the Herzen-Ogarev student circle.—568
- Novikov, Nikolai Ivanovich* (1744-1818)—Russian enlightener, public figure and writer.—533
- Novitsky, Orest Markovich* (1806-1884)—professor of philosophy at Kiev University, idealist.—297

## O

- Odoysky, Alexander Ivanovich* (1802-1839)—Russian poet, Decembrist.—596
- Odoysky, Vladimir Fyodorovich* (1804-1869)—Russian writer and musicologist.—404, 465, 468, 543
- Ogarev, Nikolai Platonovich* (1813-1877)—Russian poet and publicist, revolutionary democrat, friend and associate of A.I. Herzen.—286, 568, 570, 573-74, 589-94, 595-96, 601-02, 604-07, 609-10, 613, 615-19, 621-28, 630-33, 644, 716, 719, 729

- Olgerd (Olgerd)*—Grand Duke of Lithuania (1345-77).—140, 204
- Omar I (Umar ibn-al-Khattab)*—Arab Caliph (634-44).—412
- Ordynsky, Boris Ivanovich* (1823-1861)—professor of Roman philology, translator and author of the comments on Aristotle's *Poetics*.—95, 318
- Orlov, Alexei Fyodorovich* (1786-1861)—Russian statesman, soldier and diplomat; later gendarme chief.—707
- Orlov, Mikhail Fyodorovich* (1788-1842)—Russian General, Decembrist.—716
- Ostade, Adriaen van* (1610-1685)—Dutch painter and etcher.—351
- Ostrovsky, Alexander Nikolayevich* (1823-1886)—Russian dramatist.—364
- Ostwald, Wilhelm Friedrich* (1853-1932)—German naturalist, idealist philosopher.—657
- Otto, Luisa* (1819-1895)—German writer, representative of "true socialism".—650-51
- Ovsyaniko-Kulikovsky, Dmitri Nikolayevich* (1853-1920)—Russian literary critic and linguist.—514, 571, 585
- Owen, Robert* (1771-1858)—English utopian socialist.—62, 100-01, 210, 227, 280, 299, 314, 685
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